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make merry
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left celebrity

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Even approval can't crack the taboo



The government hoped its support of a gay bar in Dali, Yunnan Province, might create a space where gay men could socialize and learn to stay safe from HIV/AIDS. But that opening is on hold.

Since the story broke, the bar has been a flashpoint for many conservatives' deep-seated fears and condemnations of homosexuals. With its purpose exposed, would-be patrons must risk being outed.

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Illegal golf courses swallowing country's farmland, gov says



By Zhao Hongyi

While recent years have seen a boom in golf course construction, the government has warned that most of these courses are illegal, and were built in violation of zoning restrictions imposed in 2004.

Sources said as many as 400 golf courses have been built since 2004, comprising two in three new constructions. The momentum has shown no signs of slowing down. If current construction continues, the country would have 2,700 courses by 2015.

Five years ago, the Ministry of Land and Resources issued a total prohibition on new course construction. However, market demand has led most developers to ignore that order, securing construction rights using false project names.

One real estate developer in Zhejiang Province, Anji Longpaowu, rented 160 hectares of farmland from the local villagers and turned it into an 18-hole golf course. The course was branded "The Village Club," and was supposedly an eco-tourism and fitness facility.

"We are doing this because there is a demand and a profit to be had," one Beijing property developer who refused to state his name told media. He said that much of the current expansion has been completed in ignorance of social responsibility.

"We are still investigating these courses and expect to have a more accurate picture of what is going on by mid-2010," Dong Zuojie, director-general of national land and resources planning, said.

The National Commission for Economic Reform and Development, the Ministry of Land and Resources and the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development said its target is large courses, those being more than 9 holes and 33.3 hectares.

Dong said the average farmland per head is about 0.1 hectare. "It's unbelievable that they are building such large courses, and that's without thinking about maintenance costs," Dong said. Watering the turf of a 40- to 50-hectare course uses up an estimated 3,000 cubic meters of water every day.

Observers said the government is acting to protect the country's farmland, which is already dangerously limited.

But golf, as a popular new sport – especially after last year's Olympic Games – has been overwhelmingly embraced by many in the country. What was once a sport limited to the rich is quickly expanding to be popular with lower income brackets.

The average golfer used to be a businessman, movie star or expat, but today, this numbers are being overshadowed by office workers and the golf couriers. "Many companies like to register their employees as club members as a perk since our prices are falling," he said.

"The best thing would be to build the courses on mountainous or otherwise useless land instead of taking up valuable farmland," Hao Weiwen, an economist from the Ministry of Commerce, said.

"It would be best to take another approach (other than closing the course) to solve this problem, that's the only rational way to prevent further development of illegal courses," he said.

Extra courses have made the game affordable to three million Chinese golfers.

CFP Photo

2009 Expo draws more international products

By Zhao Hongyi

Japanese cartoonists, Taiwanese gadgets and Korean travel companies met this year at the Fourth China Beijing International Cultural and Creative Industry Expo (ICCIE) over the weekend. The expo gave visitors a preview of the latest in cultural and creative products from around the world.

Over 1,515 cultural and creative exhibitors, both from China and abroad, participated. The expo consisted of comprehensive exhibitions, nine forums, nine business promotions, nine creating demonstrations and five cultural performances.

During the five-day event, 322 trade contracts, agreements and intentions were signed. Those documents secured agreements worth nearly 38 billion yuan in sectors like art performance, publication, film and television and design, as well as in other media including cartoons and online games.

Beijing puts creativity first

The city has been trying to rebrand itself as a capital of design and creativity for more than a decade. Since then, several art blocks have emerged, like the 798 Art Zone in the city's northeast and the Songzhuang artists' village in the southeast.

But these blocks have been tainted by heavy business interests – particularly 798, where real estate has grown unaffordable due to the demand for its creative atmosphere.

Since then, the city has been promoting the development of its cartoon industry in the southeast, hoping the emerging industry can thrive. It is also redeveloping its central business district into a new media center, where dozens of international media and design groups have already established offices.

The city's university students brought 4,600 designs from their classrooms and laboratories – of



A pair of women's shoes made of chocolate.

CFP Photo

these, the robots were the most eye catching. A terra cotta robot and a pair of women's shoes made of chocolate were the most popular. A new museum of chocolate products is being built near the Olympic block, the host of the expo said.

Provinces put on a new face

Each province sent a delegation to set up a booth to display and promote its unique cultural and creative products and ideas, such as Tangka from the Tibet, ice from Heilongjiang, leisure products from Sichuan and cartoons from Xinjiang.

Seventy cultural and creative design companies from Taiwan brought fashionable goods, from daily accessories to upcoming electronic gadgets. The province signed 22.2 million yuan worth of contracts and pledged to return next year.

Many provinces used the expo as a platform to attract investment. Hebei, the long-neglected province between Beijing and Tianjin, brought traditional arts and crafts to the expo.

"We hope to convince visitors that our province is an excellent place to live and work," Li Jian-

hua, Hebei's deputy director of cultural affairs, said. "The expo is an excellent platform for us to promote ourselves."

Foreign nations come for exchange

International exchange was another highlight of this year's expo, with dozens of colorful, foreign contributions.

As one of the main participants, South Korea submitted several miniature tourist attractions for the exhibition hall, a move it hopes will lure more visitors to the country. Japanese exhibitors displayed their comic books and other creative products, hoping to find a market for them in China.

Promode Mankin, state minister of cultural affairs from Bangladesh, led a delegation to the expo in search of Chinese artists and businessmen interested in working with their counterparts in Bangladesh.

"China has long been a close friend of Bangladesh, and we hope that relationship can extend to developing our cultural sector," the state minister said. "The expo offers a new start for our enterprises that are looking for more development contacts."

Search ends for man who murdered family, mental exam awaits



By Han Manman

Li Lei, 29, who stands accused of killing six of his family members, was transported to the Municipal Detention Center Monday, where he is awaiting a mental diagnosis.

Li was arrested Saturday in Sanya, Hainan, the Beijing public security bureau said in a statement. The motive for the killings remains under investigation.

Police said Li, during a two-hour interrogation, confessed to bearing a deep hostility toward his parents and wife.

He described himself as having a "withdrawn personality," and said he had grown up in a very strict family. He described his wife Wang Meiling as an "uncompromising" woman.

Long an introvert, Li said he was dominated by his wife, and that his parents treated him harshly during his childhood. It made him "want to kill them," Li was quoted as saying by the *Beijing Morning Post*.

Police said the killings happened the night of November 23, when Li drove home after a dinner with friends. Once in the door, he began a rampage: he stabbed his wife in their bedroom before killing his younger sister and both his parents.

Deciding that "his children shouldn't live without love," Li stabbed his two children in their sleep one hour later. Li said he closed his eyes when killing the 7-year-old primary school student and the one-year-old infant.

After the killings, he fled to Sanya last Friday. Police found the crime scene at his home in Daxing District that afternoon. He was immediately declared the primary suspect, and a nationwide manhunt began.

Li was arrested Sunday at a leisure club in the island city.

The killings were a shock to relatives and neighbors. They said it was hard to believe Li could be so violent, as they

rarely heard any conflicts in his house. They considered him gentle and silent.

He was widely admired by his friends and neighbors. He was a homeowner, ran his own restaurant and had two sons. Many wondered whether he had a latent mental illness. Professor of criminology Li Meijin also wondered when she heard the news.

However, the People's Public Security University professor changed her mind when she heard the details of the case. "Mental illness is unlikely, because Li waited more than an hour before killing his sons," Li said.

"Bottled up negative emotions can easily explode when given the right pressure," said Luo Dahua, director of the China University of Political Science and Law's criminal psychology research center. He said Li's rigid upbringing and uncompromising wife likely worsened his condition.

The killings are not the only ones of their kind in recent weeks.

On Monday, police in Yunnan Province captured a man suspected of killing six of his family members. The man, Chen Wenfa, 21, was arrested Monday and charged with the killing of his parents, grandmother, uncle, uncle's wife and his cousin on November 16 at their courtyard home.

Experts said the cases highlight the need for better mental health care.

"With psychological intervention and treatment, a tragedy like Li's could have been avoided. But no one helped him when he felt depressed," Li Meijin said, adding that mental health is as important as physical health.

He said the government should work to improve its mental health system to reduce the growing problems of suicide and violent crime.

Police say Li fled to Hainan after killing his wife, parents and children.

CFP Photo

Thais fighters vow to crush Shaolin Temple at beatdown

By Venus Lee

The Asian martial arts scene is in an uproar about the upcoming match that will pit five muay Thai fighters against champions of Chinese kung fu.

Thais talk tough

Five famous Thai fighters threw down the gauntlet, saying they were ready to "wipe out the Shaolin Temple" at a press conference for the 2009 Chinese Kung Fu vs. Professional Thai Kick-boxing Competition scheduled for December 19 in Foshan, Guangdong Province: hometown of the late action hero Bruce Lee.

The Thais said they were issuing the challenge because they thought it was shameful Buddhism was being used for commercial gain. Kaoklai Kaennorsing, one of the fighters, said the Shaolin Temple had shamed the religion, *Haikou Evening* said.

"Shaolin's kung fu is a lie propagated by those 'monks,' and Chinese kung fu is nothing compared to our style," said one of the five Thai boxers. "If they accept our challenge, we will crush them 5-0."

The Thai boxers said they are longing to beat down Shi Yongxin, the abbot of Shaolin Temple.

Letter 'lost in the mail'

"Since it is a contest, there should have been a written declaration from them, but we never received anything from the Thais," Shi said last Thursday in an interview with *People* magazine's online edition. "This must be some kind of practical joke directed at Shaolin."

When the story broke online, Shaolin adherents said the provocative words were "ridiculous," and said the temple would not respond to a "secular challenge."

But hackers, who took down the temple's website three times this



Zhang Kaiying, 22, one of the Chinese contenders is preparing to answer the Thai's challenge.

CFP Photo

month in protest of its commercial activities, again vandalized the site claiming the temple would send its elite kung fu monks to fight the Thais and defend Shaolin's fame.

Zheng Shumin, the temple spokesman, said Shaolin receives far too many challenges every year, and that the temple cannot possibly answer them all. "We think this is all hype from the competition's organizers," he said.

He said the temple is a holy Buddhist site where a monk's primary concern is Zen practice and that they would not engage in fights with secular people. "We have never accepted such a challenge in the history of the Shaolin Temple," he said.

Emei to fill in

Followers of Emei kung fu, another leading style of Chinese martial arts, said they considered the challenge one that "any kung fu practitioner with a sense of justice should face."

Wang Jian, director of the Emei Martial Arts Association, and his senior disciple Huang Lin, said they have already written an application to replace Shaolin in the contest "to

let the Thai boxers know that Chinese kung fu is not so easy to beat."

"I couldn't bear it anymore after the public and all my fellow disciples urged me to show them real Chinese kung fu," Wang said.

"This is disrespectful to Chinese kung fu," said Zhang Ji from the Emei Martial Arts Association.

"As students of kung fu, whether from Shaolin, Emei, Wudang or elsewhere, we should stand up," he said.

May have been hype

However, contenders at the 2009 Chinese Kung Fu vs. Professional Thai Kick-boxing Competition — part of martial art exchange between China and Thailand — are required to be professional fighters, not folk martial artists, according to the martial arts management center of the State Sports General Administration (SSGA), which is in charge of the registration and assessment of contestants.

"We never heard about the challenge from the Thai boxers, nor did we receive an application from the Emei Martial Arts Association," said Zhou Jinbiao, deputy director of the center. "It is just hype."

Next generation drives small theater's second act

By Zhang Dongya

Actors at the Independent Theater Platform took this year's final bow Thursday. The festival's eight selected troupes staged 50 performances during the festival's monthlong run.

Most of the directors were around 30.

The festival was derived from Beijing Youth Theater Festival, which debuted last year to mark the centennial of theater in China.

But young playwrights and actors face a tough market. "They are the ones who have to seize the new century," said Fu Weibo, 54, manager of East Pioneer Theater and a festival pioneer.

"The box office returns were poor and the festival was riddled with problems, but at last they have taken their first steps."

A new platform

Ads for *Leave Before Getting Old*, last year's independent box office hit, were plastered throughout the city's subway stations in October. The play had returned to open this year's Independent Theater Platform Festival, which started October 27 at 46 Fangjia Hutong.

Leave is the true story of 30-year-old Ma Hua, a man who left Beijing for rural Yunnan Province to become a teacher, but who died in an accident

two years later.

The play, performed by five actors, combined documentary clips shot by Ma's friends, poems he wrote in Yunnan and a score of folk songs.

"There are two heroes on the stage, but they share one monologue. One is real, and the other is Ma's dream self," the play's director Shao Zehui, 32, said.

Seven other plays, including *The Tell-Tale Heart*, a pantomime adapted

from the novel by Edgar Allan Poe, were presented during the festival.

The lineup was whittled down from 22 plays staged at the second Beijing Youth Theater Festival in September.

"The festival is a platform, as its name implies, to give these young artists exposure. Selected plays were those which could offer direction and inspiration to future directors," Fu, one of the founders, said.



Shao Zehui, director of *Leave Before Getting Old*, plays the leading role.

One of the festival's pioneers, Fu Weibo, is dedicated to the next generation of theater.

Photo provided by East Pioneer



Struggling in the market

While both youth theater festivals were supported by festival committees, the independent theater festival was more market oriented: 40 percent of the box office returns were retained by the theater and 60 percent went to the troupes.

"We want young actors to experience what it's like to work in the market," Fu said.

But the returns were lower than expected. The opening play, *Leave Before Getting Old*, was staged 11 times during the festival. However, its total box office earnings were less than 60,000 yuan.

Shao said the average cost of each performance was 4,000 to 5,000 yuan, plus 2,500 to 3,000 yuan for stage rental. "We just broke even," Shao said of this year's show.

"There are a lot of reasons, like heavy snows this winter and H1N1 flu. November is always a low season for theater," Fu said.

While previous festivals were advertised by the organizing committees, the independent festival encouraged participating troupes to handle their own publicity. "There were a lot of problems in promoting the acts," Fu said. "There should have been one or two people in each troupe in charge of promotion. But most troupes didn't have even one promoter."

The eight plays were split across two venues: four were performed at the four-year-old East Pioneer Theater and the other four at the newly opened 46 Fangjia Hutong.

Fangjia theater performances did get some free advertising, as the independent theater shows were its first act. The theater heavily promoted its opening in subway stations. But the individual troupes did nothing to promote their own shows.

Fu, who dedicated himself to management of small theater, said that troupes have a lot to learn about promoting themselves. "A troupe is not complete without promoters – but that does

not mean it has to be entirely commercial," he said.

Future of small theater

Small-theater drama began in 1982 with Lin Zhaohua's *Juedui Xinhao*, Absolute Signal. The show was performed for audiences of 200 to 400 and its tickets were inexpensive. Performances proved popular with university students and young intellectuals.

Shao said they were surprised to see the audience accept and appreciate their plays.

"Theater is a place for ideals and dreams," Fu said. "Who, in this day and age, can you expect to have those? The young."

Fu said he hopes theater can become more rooted in the university scene, where the art form was first imported more than a century ago.

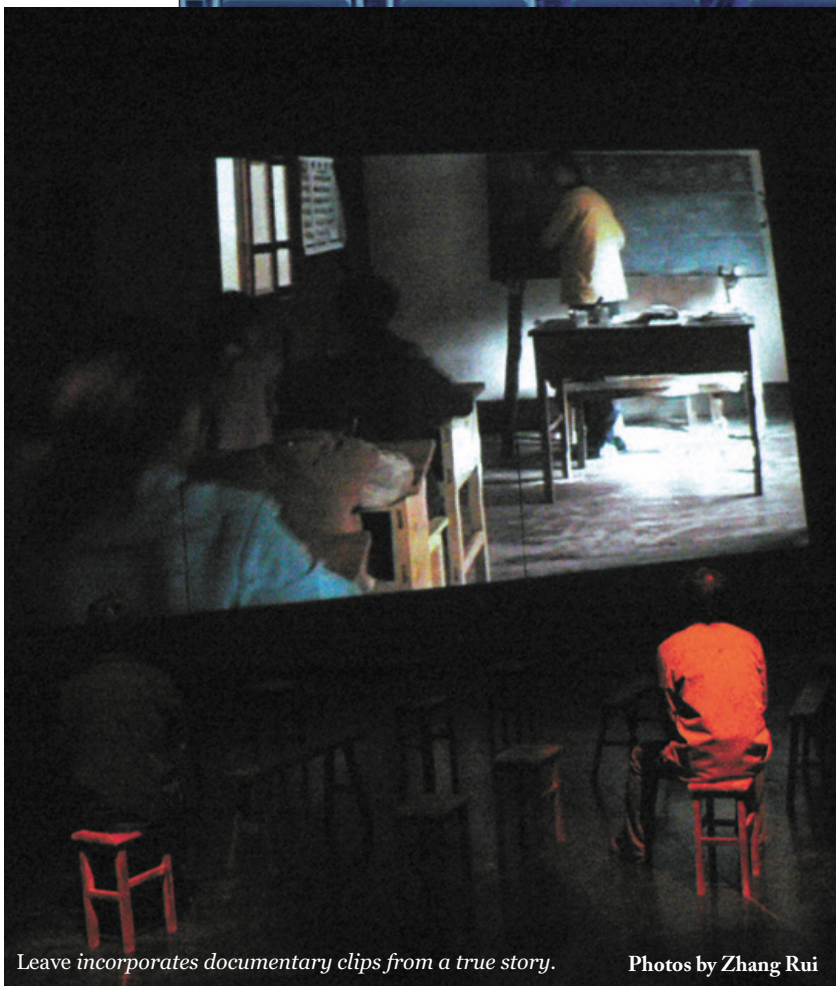
To that end, he founded the College Students Drama Festival in Beijing in 2001 and expanded it nationwide in 2004, with Guangzhou as its southern hub. The festival gave college-age drama lovers a chance to show their plays to the public. Its success led to the creation of the Beijing Youth Theater Festival last year.

This year, the Beijing festival opened to the whole country with participating troupes from Shanghai and Changsha, Hunan Province. Next year, it plans to invite foreign troupes to the festival, and negotiations are underway with troupes from France and Germany.

Fu said he hopes the festival can also connect with other international theater festivals, like the Edinburgh Theater Festival in the UK.

But domestically, a recent investigation of the Tianjin small theater scene impressed Shao. He said the city's universities had a considerable demand for theater art. He and other festival organizers are considering staging their recent playlist in other cities.

Both the Youth Theater Festival and Independent Theater Festival will continue. Despite this year's troubles, Shao said the platforms are off to a successful start.



Leave incorporates documentary clips from a true story.

Photos by Zhang Rui

New face of 'Made in China'

Gov launches TV ad to repair brand's image

"Made in China, it is everywhere," goes a new advertisement promoting Made-in-China brands that airs on international cable television. The ad, produced by the Ministry of Commerce, aims to repair and bolster the image of Chinese-made goods in overseas markets.



Screengrab of the ads

5
Outlook

International ad campaign launched

A 30-second commercial promoting Chinese-made products recently debuted on the Cable News Network (CNN), the media monitoring website media.com reported.

The report says the ad is the Chinese government's first ever branding campaign.

The "Made in China, Made with the World" TV commercial is being broadcast on CNN in the US and Asia, said global advertising agency DDB, which made the ad.

It is expected to run for six weeks, according to Chinese media reports.

The ad first aired November 23 and stresses that some Chinese products are made with the help of foreign companies and technology, the Ministry of Commerce said in a statement.

It features a jogger tying shoelaces that bear the label "Made in China with American sports technology" and a model wearing clothes tagged "Made in China with French designers."

"It reflects the attitude and aspiration of Chinese enterprises to strengthen cooperation with other countries to provide high-quality products for consumers from various countries," the ministry said.

A statement from DDB Guoan in Beijing said the ad was commissioned by the Ministry of Commerce in partnership with four industry groups: the China Advertising Association of Commerce, the China Chamber of Commerce for Import and Export of Machinery and Electronic Products, the China Chamber of Commerce for Import and Export of Light Industrial Products and Arts-Crafts, and the China Chamber of Commerce for Import and Export of Textiles.



The ad is the Government's first ever branding campaign. IC Photos

Analyst

Ad to rebuild 'Made in China' image

The ad will strengthen collaboration between China and foreign companies, said Karen See, a spokeswoman for DDB's Hong Kong office.

Chinese analysts welcomed the ad campaign, saying it is good for the government to take the initiative in promoting the image of Chinese-made merchandise.

Zhou Shijian, a former trade official, said this will improve the reputation of locally made products.

Yu Guoming, associate dean of the School of Journalism at Renmin University of China, pointed out that through the ad, the government is trying to persuade the world not to shun basic Chinese commodities.

In recent years, the Chinese government has given more attention to public relations. Its response to rioting between Uyghur and Han citizens in Xinjiang Province

several months ago included an unusually open attitude toward the foreign media, such as allowing reporters access to affected areas.

The new TV ad shows the government is taking a proactive approach to communicating with the world but it fails to challenge perceptions of China as a manufacturer, said Scott Kronick, president of Ogilvy Public Relations Worldwide China.

"Where the advertising falls short is that it continues to position China as the world's factory, thereby reinforcing consumer perceptions that China only makes goods that are sold under other brands," he said.

"If China is indeed seeking to shift perceptions, now is the time for China to evolve from a 'Made in China' positioning to a 'Created in China' positioning that would highlight its role as an innovator."

Background

Fears about China's goods

Chinese products' saturation of overseas markets has sparked reports regarding quality concerns and worries about local jobs being lost.

A 2007 Associated Press story headlined "Is 'Made in China' avoidable?" reflects common US coverage of the topic. The story reported how American shoppers were trying to fill their shopping carts with products free of components from China, but "The trouble is, that may be almost impossible."

Andrea Gomez, an American in Beijing, said she is likely to associate Chinese products with bad quality. "A lot of toys and some electronic products made in China are of poor quality," she said.

But John Johnson, an English teacher in Beijing, does not agree: "Chinese products do not necessarily mean poor quality."

Two years ago, Johnson bought a Chinese-made LCD TV for 12,000 yuan rather than a Japanese or Korean model, which he said were priced sig-

nificantly higher.

"I don't think Japanese or Korean ones are four times better than Chinese ones, as shown on the price tag. My made-in-China TV works quite well," he said.

One of the latest Hollywood blockbusters, *2012*, has "for the first time – cast the Chinese as good guys," the *Christian Science Monitor* commented on its website last week, noting the movie's depiction of China-made arks saving humanity from an end-of-days catastrophe.

Chen Hao, whose family-run factory in Zhejiang Province is a supplier of plastic pipelines and sofa rollers to Ikea, said the country has quality global brands such as Haier and that foreigners' negative image of made-in-China products should be corrected.

"Chinese products deliver good value and good quality," he said, "otherwise they wouldn't have survived and sold well all over the world for more than two decades." (Agencies)

Why do garlic prices stink?

Swine flu speculation the root of garlic's foul cost

By Huang Daohen

In most years, the best investment is predictable: gold, real estate or stocks.

But this year's best investment was a surprise: garlic.

Chinese people have long believed that garlic can help the body fight flus like this year's A/H1N1, and that belief is being reflected in the commodities market. The cost of the plant has been increasing exponentially, from 0.2 yuan per kilogram to more than 7 yuan on the wholesale market since February.

Garlic has outpaced gold and silver, becoming the most sought after item. This year's get-rich-quick scheme seems to be a closet full of garlic.



Vendors have been selling truckloads of garlic since the price went sky high. Economists point to speculation as the cause.

CFP Photo

Garlic prices surge

"It's been a dream come true," said Song Lei, a vendor at the local Xinfadi vegetable market. "I never expected a farmer like me could get a chance at doing big business."

Song has made it big by selling the foul-smelling root once free in every noodle shop. At Beijing wholesale markets, the price of garlic has grown tenfold from 0.8 yuan per kilogram in February to 8 yuan now.

In Shandong Province's Jinxiang county, the country's top garlic harvesting and trading site, the price jumped fortyfold.

Song, 48, runs a small farm in Daxing district and started growing garlic in 1994. He said the price was stable before 2008. But when the global financial crisis hit last year, the market collapsed: exports fell off, and garlic was being sold on the domestic market at a loss.

"There was no demand at that time even though the price fell to less than 0.5 yuan per kilo," Song said. Like most garlic growers and dealers, he opted to plant less garlic.

But exports recovered early this year. Song said he was stunned when one customer came up to him in February asking to buy all his garlic.

Now, Song said he sells a truckload of garlic at a high price. "If this keeps going on, I'm afraid I'm going to become extremely rich year," he said.

Price surges with flu fears

But why? Garlic is one of the least romantic vegetables, and

rarely does anyone consume copious amounts of it.

Many experts have pointed to the traditional belief that garlic can strengthen one's immune system. In the north, the plant has long been considered a herbal cure for everything from the common cold to the flu.

"I don't know much about A/H1N1, but garlic can prevent

healing powers.

At the Xinfadi vegetable market, Song said many foreigners have also visited to import his garlic. He said some customers were offering a \$1 (6.8 yuan) per kilo for his garlic in hopes of getting an immunoboost this season.

But Song says the root of the price spike is the drop in production.

Thanks to a belief in its flu-repellent powers, garlic traders are on course to get stinking rich this year.

— Song Lei

ordinary colds," one elderly man surnamed Yang said as he picked through a vegetable cart at the market. "I've not had a cold for many years and every year I buy several dozen kilograms of garlic," he said.

Yang said the recent spike in garlic prices may prove that the plant's value in fighting off A/H1N1, as the virus is most active this season. Many people, fearing an even greater spike in prices, are stockpiling garlic for the winter. Yang himself walked out of the market with 10 kilograms of garlic.

Schools have also jumped on the bandwagon. Xinhua news agency reported that one high school in Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province, bought 200 kilograms of garlic to feed to its students.

But China is not the only culture that believes in the root's power. European folklore is rife with stories of its

According to dasuan.cn, a website to track garlic growth, the total area used for garlic cultivation dropped from 673,670 hectares in 2007 to 370,519 hectares in 2008.

Ice and snowfall in the north further affected production, he said.

But garlic remains a big business in China. The country produces three times more of it than the rest of the world combined, much of it for export.

Liquidity leads to speculation

But can less availability and greater demand alone explain a tenfold increase in the price of garlic? Economists have another answer.

Some postulate that garlic's price has been affected by massive bank lending, which was designed to stimulate the economy. However, that money is

being misused for speculation.

"Too much liquidity in any market will always lead to speculation," Zhao Xiao, an economist at the University of Science and Technology Beijing, said.

Zhao said the garlic bubble reflects the old-fashioned pattern of speculation seen throughout history. In the 16th-century-Dutch-tulip frenzy, wealthy merchants used their savings to buy bulbs and hoarded them to sell at a higher price.

"Now, garlic merchants are doing the same," Zhao said. "They have bought up garlic by the truckload and are selling it after creating a scarcity."

Zhao said speculating on garlic is relatively easy compared with speculating on gold and silver. "The merchant just needs a warehouse, cash and a few trucks. That is it," he said.

The speculation has attracted the attention of both Shanxi coal barons and Wenzhou traders. "Garlic has become the most sought after item on the commodities market," he said.

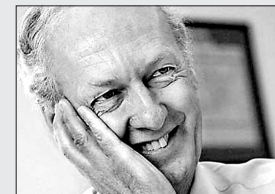
But when the garlic bubble bursts, today's speculators will be left looking for alternatives. Song said some are now speculating on chili peppers.

"I heard that chili peppers can be made into pharmaceutical products which not only prevent A/H1N1, but also play a role in cleansing," he said.

A spokesman for Xinfadi market said that at this time last year, the wholesale price of chili peppers was 6 to 10 yuan per kilogram. The current market wholesale price is 18 to 22 yuan per kilogram — a two- to three-fold increase.

Opinion

Why China? Anthony Bolton



Anthony Bolton

Anthony Bolton, one of the top stock pickers, is returning to fund management with the launch of a China fund, hailing it as the "investment opportunity of the decade."

As manager of the Fidelity International Special Situations Fund for 28 years, from 1979 through 2007, Bolton delivered an annualized average return of 19.5 percent, compared with its benchmark index's 13.5 percent return.

Bolton said Chinese incomes are rising at an incredible rate, and that the point of inflection will be when per-capita gross domestic product hits the \$4,000 (27,300 yuan) to \$5,000 mark, which the International Monetary Fund forecasts will happen in 2011.

"As average incomes pass this key threshold, you get a big growth in the group that can afford to make the purchases of cars and apartments, and that is where China is today," Bolton said. Coupled with a strong banking system that can afford to make consumer loans, the economy is on its way to significant growth, he said.

"China is the opportunity of a generation, and I'll only be able to play a bit of a part of that because I'm not going to do it forever," Bolton said. "I said I'd do it for at least the next two years. The center of gravity is shifting to this part of the world, and I want to play a part in it while I can."

Although the economy has been criticized for being state-run and for shutting out private enterprises, Bolton sees this as a plus, since projects can be expedited and are not bogged down in politics, as they are in Western democracies.

He said he expects the government will eventually permit its yuan to become stronger, which will guarantee investors currency gains on top of the stock gains he predicts.

"I believe in my lifetime, China will become the second-largest stock market in the world," Bolton said.

(Agencies)

Public pressure delays opening of gov-backed gay bar



A view inside the bar

Though gay bars are flourishing in major cities in China, where there is an estimated 30 million homosexuals, two-thirds of which are men, the one in Dali, Yunnan Province, became a media target.

The bar, which should have opened Tuesday, World AIDS Day, was the brainchild of long-time HIV/AIDS activist Zhang Jianbo, a doctor at the Dali Number 2 People's Hospital. His objective was to create a space where gay men could socialize and at the same time receive information on how to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS. In Dali, many young gay men are migrants from the countryside who have little or no knowledge of safe sex.

"There was too much media attention in recent days, which could have deterred some of the bar's customers who are not out to family and friends," Zhang said, explaining the delay in the bar's opening. "Volunteers who will run the club's day-to-day operations would also have been put in the uncomfortable position of being labeled as gay."

Zhang himself felt cornered. He said he received many harassing text messages that called him "stupid" to open the bar and advised him to instead "help gays get rid of their wicked habits."

But Zhang remains hopeful the bar, partially funded by the Dali Health Bureau and two local AIDS organizations with an infusion of 120,000 yuan, can open once the furor dies down.

Statistics from the Ministry of Health show that Yunnan is home to nearly a quarter of the country's 740,000 reported HIV and AIDS cases, while Dali has been cited one of the worst-hit cities. Experts estimate that Yunnan has more than 850,000 gays, only about 6,000 of whom are open about their sexual orientation.



The bar offers free condoms for its customers.

Photos provided by Shenghuo Xinbao

By Han Manman

Homosexuality is no longer as taboo of a subject in China, partly because of the government's more objective attitude toward the gay community. But obstacles remain: the first government-supported gay bar that would double as an HIV/AIDS education venue remains closed because of negative perceptions.



The country's first publicly funded gay bar in Dali has stirred debate over the use of taxpayers' money.

Comment

A good sign for gay community

As a long-time worker in HIV/AIDS prevention and control, I know how hard it is for us to reach out to this community to promote messages like safe sex. I also thought of opening a bar for regular get-togethers with gays. We could teach them about HIV/AIDS and how to protect themselves from it. Even though the bar has delayed opening, it has become a sign that the government is beginning to pay attention to gay people as a vulnerable group in the HIV/AIDS issue.

— Luke Zhao, executive editor of Beijing-based Gay Spot magazine.

New approach but overexposed

This is a new approach for me. I like the idea that local NGOs use a bar for their education campaign, but it must be in an environment where the "customers" don't feel they are exposed. I can understand if gay people become scared to use a bar like that; they must feel that the government

is keeping track of them. I think the main reason for the bar's delayed opening is overexposure.

Though there is no government-backed gay bar in my country, we encounter similar things. In my country, sometimes the media reports something without giving details and without running pictures to give a place some privacy.

— Anders Bager, IT consultant

Endorsement of gay behavior

The bar is not only a waste of taxpayers' money but also an indirect endorsement of homosexual behavior. The bottom line is the government is supporting something which challenges social morality. The gay community's activities have always been carried out in the dark, but now government support will tell them, "OK, it's time for you to do things openly." It's a way to encourage them. With this "legal" gay bar existing, who can promise gays would never use the place

to meet more gay partners and further spread HIV/AIDS?

There is, of course, no shortage of gay bars in China — ones that serve drinks and play music. A cheerless bar full of government-sponsored lectures would probably have been a waste of money anyway.

— Grayson Wu, a netizen

The bar's result is unclear

I doubt whether the education and prevention campaigns could have been effectively carried out. The bar's nature is also not clear: no one knows if it's a non-profit entity or a commercial enterprise. I think the best way to promote the prevention of HIV/AIDS is to solicit the help of popular figures in the gay community. Through their influence and their network, gays might be more open to HIV/AIDS prevention education.

— Tong Ge, administrative director of Chinese Association of STD/AIDS Prevention and Control

Voice — Please leave us alone

When I go to a bar, I'm only looking for fun. But this bar is not for entertainment; it has a political agenda.

I will definitely not go to the bar even if it opens. The bar has been "labeled" and I will be too if I go there. People will look at me through "tinted lenses." And I can imagine more straights going there out of curiosity.

Beijing had bars that promoted themselves as gay bars and they were closed down. It is similar to opening a club for patients needing another kidney: everyone who goes there is practically announc-

ing to all that he or she is ill. Who will dare go there?

The most popular gay bar in Beijing at the moment has always avoided mentioning such sensitive words in their promotions. But with more people knowing about the bar, more straights than gays are going there now.

I admit more people have begun to understand and accept us. The government's attitude toward us has also improved a bit. But the deep-rooted discrimination toward us is very hard to change. Just days ago

when CCTV interviewed some gays, they used words like "gay patient" instead of "gay." I know they didn't mean anything bad, but it was painful to hear.

When talking about gays, many people will immediately think of a promiscuous group that is most vulnerable to HIV/AIDS.

The space for us to live respectfully in this society is still too narrow. We're not begging for people's understanding, but please don't mistreat us. We haven't disturbed your life. We just want to lead a normal life.

— Xiao Mai, a gay man in Beijing

Background — China sees improvements in gay rights

For decades, the country's gay community has lived in fear of discrimination and prejudice. The earliest gay bars — first seen 15 years ago — were often the target of police raids and closures. Many homosexuals married to escape family and social pressures.

The country's gay population is estimated at 30 million, but the real number

could be much higher as many homosexuals remain in the closet, the China News Service reported.

But the government and the public's attitude toward this community is improving. In 2001, homosexuality was finally removed from the official list of mental disorders. In 2005, Shanghai's Fudan University intro-

duced its first undergraduate course on homosexuality.

This year has already been an eventful one for gay rights. In June, the first gay pride festival was held in Shanghai. Later in the month, the five-day Beijing Queer Film Festival was held — an event that police banned in 2001 and 2005.

Queen of flamenco eyes China

By He Jianwei

After Tokyo, flamenco has its eyes set on China.

"We brought flamenco to Tokyo a few years ago. The result is that there are now over 200 flamenco training centers in Tokyo. I hope China will be the next hot market," Cristina Hoyos, a 63-year-old Spanish dancer and choreographer, said before a show at the Poly Theater on Monday.

Accompanied by their crackling, rhythmic clapping, Hoyos and her husband Juan Antonio Jimenez passionately stomped and swayed on stage. Their movements belied their age.

"There is no age limit in flamenco, so I can dance as long as I want to. And so can my husband, who is over 70. Don't ever think you're too old to dance," Hoyos said.

Last weekend, Hoyos and Spain's premier ballet company, Metros Dansa, presented a modern dance version of the classic French opera *Carmen*. It was Hoyos' second performance in Beijing following *Journey to the South*, a traditional flamenco show.

Through their interpretation of *Carmen*, Hoyos and Metros Dansa showed the possibilities in the marriage of various dance and music genres. The troupe's choreographer

Ramon Oller reinvented the opera as a ballet and created a symbolic, flamenco-dancing character.

Hoyos said she was moved by Oller's vision and innovation.

The Spanish dancer, an international icon of flamenco, rose to fame in the mid 1980s with the films *Blood Wedding*, *Witched Love* and *Carmen*, the play's on-screen version. The pieces were regarded as a flamenco film trilogy and made Hoyos synonymous with *Carmen*.

In 1992, Hoyos performed solo in the opening and closing ceremonies of the Barcelona Olympics, sharing the glorious moment with her countryman, tenor Placido Domingo.

Hoyos has devoted her life to promoting flamenco overseas. A breast cancer survivor, she said that not even disease could tear her away from her life's passion.

"I was shocked when the doctor told me I could not dance any more after my operation. But my will to dance was so strong. It was as though I was born to be a dancer. It was impossible for me to leave the stage," she said, adding she regarded every clap and every crack of her heel a nourishing act.

Hoyos admitted that being a flamenco dancer requires intense



CFP Photo

Cristina Hoyos and her husband Juan Antonio Jimenez passionately stomping and swaying on stage.

discipline and determination. "You need to keep practicing year after year. Many of my partners stopped due to the unbearable pain and hardship. Young dancers mainly practice skills, but dancers

my age need to keep their minds calm," she said.

Hoyos said she plans to conduct flamenco workshops in Beijing. "We've worked with (Beijing's) Spanish Fund. I hope China will catch the

flamenco fever soon," she said.

"Flamenco is a fascinating dance. Besides technique, it needs passion that everyone can feel." This, she said, is the secret to drawing crowds.

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EU celebrates Lisbon Treaty's implementation

By Han Manman

The European Union (EU) hailed the beginning of a new era Tuesday after its Lisbon Treaty went into force, carrying with it the bloc's hopes of becoming a more powerful global force.

Ambassadors from the 27 EU member states in Beijing gathered that day at the European Commission's office in Dongzhimen to celebrate the milestone.

EU ambassador Serge Abou said the bloc believes the treaty will provide new and significant benefits to Europeans and will settle debate on the EU's structure.

"It has taken years to make this constitution fully operational. The Lisbon Treaty is seen as a milestone in Europe's integration and political development," he told reporters.

The treaty increases the powers of the European Parliament and makes EU decision-making less unwieldy. It creates an EU president and enhances the powers of its foreign policy chief, who will oversee a new diplomatic corps.

The Lisbon Treaty's implementation will also make coordination between China and the EU more direct. As James Kynge,

the Financial Times editor, put it, "I think one big frustration in China's relationship with Europe has been that it's never clear in Europe who is the boss."

On November 19, the EU handed the jobs of president and foreign policy chief to two little-known compromise figures instead of global heavy hitters.

Belgium's Prime Minister Herman Van Rompuy was appointed President of the European Council. Van Rompuy, who promised to listen to all EU states, is seen less as a symbol of power than of diplomacy, something crucial for the post.

The Lisbon Treaty also aims to develop swifter, more consistent decision making on law and order issues through more streamlined institutions. It also gives the EU greater ability to combat crime, terrorism and human trafficking.

Ambassadors in Beijing said the treaty was praised by ordinary Europeans because it ensures that they have a say in European affairs.

As stipulated in the treaty, the Delegation of the European Commission to China was renamed the Delegation of the European Union to China.



The approval of the Lisbon Treaty means a new name for the EU delegation to China.

CFP Photo

The diplomats also welcomed China's promise to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions ahead of UN Climate Change Conference on Monday.

The country announced November 26 it would reduce its carbon dioxide emissions per GDP unit in 2020 by 40 to 45 percent from the 2005 level.

Abou said that China, the biggest developing nation, set a good example for international efforts

in emissions reduction.

Swedish Ambassador Mikael Lindstrom, whose country currently holds the rotating EU presidency, said he and his country "have a lot of respect for the series of efforts" China has made on the issue.

"Climate change is really a serious global crisis. We cannot fall into a zero-sum game," he said. "We hope it will be win-win, but if we don't do anything it will be lose-lose."

Danish royal couple unveils children's exhibition



Prince Joachim and Princess Marie at the exhibition in Xidan's Joy city mall.

Photo provided by Danish Embassy

By Wang Yu

The crowd that formed outside Xidan's Joy City mall early Sunday morning was not itching to go shopping: they were waiting to see Danish royalty. At 10 am, Prince Joachim and Princess Marie arrived to unveil a children's cultural exhibition.

The Sino-Danish exhibition, which ran through Tuesday, showcased paintings by Chinese children and clothing by 17 Danish brands.

"We have become famous

worldwide for our design's simplicity and innovation and for our keen eye for the crucial details that make a product truly unique," Princess Marie said, adding the event was organized to show Chinese children various Danish designs reflecting the country's values.

One of the exhibition's inspirations was fairytales, a Danish import from the works of Hans Christian Andersen like "The Little Mermaid," "The Ugly Duckling" and "The Emperor's New Clothes."

"Fairytales are without a doubt an important part of any happy childhood. It provides us with a magical lens through which to view the world, and it opens our mind to what we can achieve if we allow ourselves to reach beyond the boundaries of our current lives," said the Princess.

Prince Joachim added that the event was a tribute to Andersen's creativity and to Danish and Chinese diplomatic relations.

Because kids were the stars

of the exhibition, organizers wanted to present it in a fun way, said Michala Mollerup, at the Danish Embassy and one of the event's organizers.

This included holding a fashion show in which both Danish and Chinese children strutted in Danish designer clothes alongside catwalk professionals. Some of the kids looked confused and uncomfortable under the spotlight, but thankfully, none of them cried.

Dance company portrays Philippine folk culture, traditions

By Venus Lee

Three decades after its first China performance, the Philippines' national folkdance company Bayanihan returned to Beijing with "Rhythms of the Islands" last Friday. The show at the China Central Conservatory of Music portrayed agricultural Philippine life, religion, war, the movements of nature and courtship. They reflected the Southeast Asian nation's ethnic roots and the deep influence of Spanish, Muslim and Chinese cultures.

"The customs in the northern part of the country are similar with those of the Gaohan aborigines in Taiwan," Sonia Cataumber Brady, the Philippine ambassador, said in her welcome remarks. "While the country's central regions were influenced by Spain for more than 300 years, the southern parts were influenced by Muslim culture." Malaysia lies close to the country's southern land mass of Mindanao.

The show, organized by the Philippine Embassy and the World Music Society of China, drew an audience of more than 200, which included diplomats, journalists and university students. The Chinese spectators particularly enjoyed the bina-suan, where dancers balanced wine-filled glasses on their head and hands, and the tinikling, where performers briskly danced between two beating and tapping bamboo poles.

"From their tribal warrior attire to exquisite Spanish gowns, the whole cast looked true to their roles," said Wu Jiewei, a professor of Philippine studies at Peking University. "It was really a mix of Philippine folk dance culture."

The show was a tribute to 34 years of Sino-Philippine relations as well as a way to entice Chinese people to visit the country and learn more about its art, history and culture.

"We want to carry the bayanihan spirit overseas through this cultural exchange," said Ferdinand Jose, director and choreographer of the company created in 1957, and which has since performed in 700 cities worldwide. The troupe's name is derived from a Filipino word that means "communal effort to achieve an objective," rooted in a tradition where villagers help a family move to a new place. The process involves literally carrying their house to its new location by putting under the hut's stilts bamboo poles that the men lifted.

Jose said young people nowadays – whether in the Philippines, China or other countries – are not very thrilled with folk performances, but the troupe does not allow this to frustrate their efforts to promote traditional Filipino culture abroad.

"It is less effective to educate young people only in folklore given that Western pop culture is so pervasive, but we can combine education and entertainment to attract their attention," he said.

Beijing hosts film festival for outdoor sports

By Wang Yu

Who could have imagined that the outdoor sporting industry has its own film festival? The annual Banff Mountain Film Festival features the best short films on extreme outdoor sports and is held in a different country each year. In January, Beijing will host the extravaganza when it comes to the country for the first time.

The festival – launched in 1976 by the Banff Centre, an arts, cultural and educational institution in Banff, Alberta, Canada – showcases 25 films including those on culture and the environment. There are also the staple subjects like mountain climbing, downhill skiing and kayaking.

The festival was introduced to Beijing on November 20 with the advance screening of four films. Among them were *Crux*, in which three of the world's most famous BMX bikers demonstrate their incredible skill by riding up a chain, and the documentary *The Shape End: Base Solo*, which discusses the history of base jumping, base solo and base line, and received an enthusiastic response from viewers.

The entire lineup of 16 films will be screened in Kingdom Garden Movie Station at Xiaoxitian on January 16 and 17.

"I hope the festival brings true outdoor sporting culture and its spirit to China. It will be a new addition to the local scene," said Huang He, marketing director of Himalaya Rock & Ice,

a local outdoor event organizer, and co-organizer of the film festival in Beijing.

Huang, himself an outdoor sport lover, has been working with The Banff Centre to send Chinese participants to the film festival the past five years.

Many guests at the screening two weeks ago said the outdoor sporting scene in China is growing fast, although it still has a long way to go compared with its foreign counterparts.

"So the films are the perfect way to invite more people in China to get involved," said He Yihong, executive chief editor of *Outdoor Exploration* magazine, the festival's co-organizer.

During the film festival, forums on outdoor sports will also be held, featuring international outdoor sporting celebrities and officials from The Banff Centre.

"We're so glad the most reputable outdoor sporting film event in Canada has come to China. Next year, Canada is hosting the Winter Olympics in Vancouver, so I hope the films give Chinese people some idea of the country before they travel there," Derek Galpin, regional director of Canadian Tourism Commission, said.

The festival, which has toured more than 30 countries since 1986, will also present a short film on life in Tibet, a project of NGO Apple Foundation.

For more information on the film festival or to book tickets, visit banffmountainfilm.cn.



The festival's short films focus on extreme outdoor sports.

Photo provided by Banff Center

German Christmas Charity Bazaar draws thousands



The German Christmas Charity Bazaar at the German Embassy

Photo by Huang Xiao

By Huang Xiao

The annual German Christmas Charity Bazaar is becoming more and more popular with the city's expatriates. Last Saturday, more than 4,000 people turned up at the German Embassy to go Christ-

mas shopping and get their hands on favorites like bratwursts and German wine.

This year's bazaar, which coincided with the 20th year anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, drew a bigger crowd than expected. One of

the embassy guards said people started arriving at 9 am though the event would not begin until 11 am.

The bazaar, usually held a month before Christmas – when hotels around town begin lighting up their Christmas trees – offers popular German foods like bread with curried sausages; maultaschen, or dough pockets with meat filling similar to dumplings; dampfnudel, or steamed noodles, with vanilla sauce; and Gluhwein, or mulled wine.

The bazaar is a red-calendar event for people on the hunt for Christmas gifts and holiday ornaments. On Saturday, booths offered advent wreaths, Christmas decorations, calendars, handicrafts and Christmas cakes and cookies.

While guests did their

shopping amid festive music, Santa Claus roamed the grounds and gave a free bottle of beer to birthday celebrants. As parents chose cakes and wines, children were kept busy with games or running on the lawn. Everyone in the expatriate community seemed to be there: it was difficult to turn a corner without bumping into an old friend or a business acquaintance.

But the bazaar was not just about having fun; all proceeds from the event and any donations received that day will go to charity. Recipients include Beijing Sun Village, which helps special children and provides a home to those whose parents are in jail or prison; Beijing Huiling, which works with mentally and physically disabled people; and Beijing Hongdandan, an NGO for the blind.

Event

Brazilian drumming class

SambAsia Beijing is the only ensemble in China actively promoting the drumming traditions of Brazil. The community-based organization recently moved its shows to live music venue 2 Kolegas and holds an introductory drumming class there every Sunday. The class is open to anyone with little or no experience in music.

Where: 2 Kolegas, 21 Liangmaqiao Lu, Sanyuanqiao, Chaoyang District

When: Every Sunday, 11 am – 1 pm

Email:

sambasiabeijing@gmail.com

Cost: free

Open house for Recheberg designs

Visit the boutique of German fashion designer Kathrin von Rechenberg to see her latest collection. Von Rechenberg, a native of Munich, Germany, who moved to Beijing five years ago, is known for her elegant simplicity: flowing fabrics, clear lines and essential graphics. Classic suit jackets become surprisingly light with wool crepe georgette or velvet silk. Asian traditions can be recognized among the details of her designs: wide kimono sleeves, Chinese band collars, wrap-around trousers. Clothes and accessories by other designers are also on display.

Where: Yard behind building 12, Xinyuan Xili Dongjie, Sanlitun, Chaoyang District

Open: December 4, 10 am – 4 pm

Tel: 6463 1788

Montessori open house

The International Montessori Teaching Institute (IMTI) in Beijing invites parents to their open house and workshops on Saturday. Talks will be given in both Chinese and English. Over a cup of hot cocoa and scrumptious cookies, participants will learn the latest in Montessori education and its teacher training methods. IMTI, a partner of the Northeast Montessori Institute (NMI), offers the American Montessori Society Early Childhood program. NMI is accredited by the Montessori Accreditation Council for Teacher Education and affiliated with the American Montessori Society. The Beijing school offers a first-rate training curriculum and an environment in which students can learn from internationally recognized Montessori teachers.

Where: International Montessori Teaching Institute, 688 Glory Palace, 2 Shunfu Lu, Renhe Town, Shunyi District

When: December 5, 9:30 am – 3 pm

Tel: 8949 6877

Visions of China

The 1990s offered a startling contrast between large-scale productions and works by fifth and sixth generation independent filmmakers. After discussing the international fame achieved by Zhang Yimou and Chen Kaige and the complex world of sixth generation directors, CNEX Saloon Cafe's "Chinese Cinema Retrospective on Six Generations of Filmmaking" will present on Sunday one of the period's most intense works: Lu Yue's *Xiao Shuo*, or *The Obscure* (1999). Lu worked as a technician on several of Zhang's films before making this movie, which explores some of the most ubiquitous themes in work of the sixth generation filmmakers: the question of identity, a person's relationship to the past and present and the passing of time. Yang Zi, a film critic and chief editor of Quacor.com, is scheduled to speak.

Where: CNEX Saloon Cafe, Building 1, Jingyuan, 3 Guangqu Dong Lu, Chaoyang District

Open: December 6, 3-5:30 pm

Tel: 8721 5576

(By Wei Ying)

Bird's Nest prepares public skiing facilities



Blueprint for the new skiing venue

Snowmakers start working next week. Photos by Hao Yi/ Li Shi

By Annie Wei

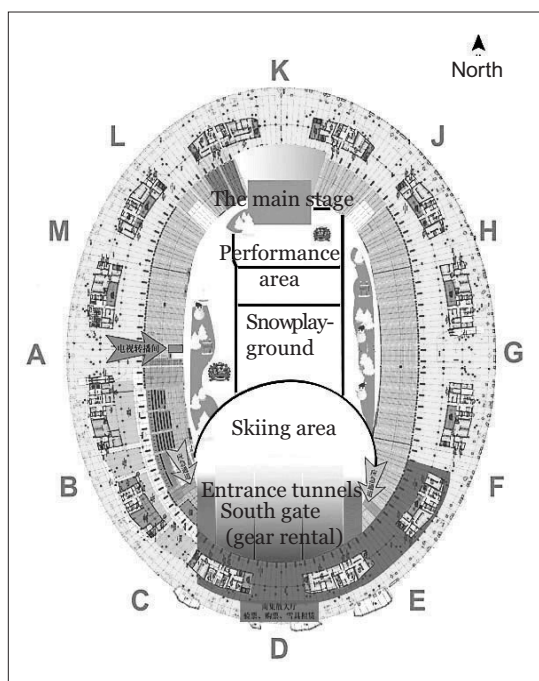
In two weeks, Beijingers no longer have to travel to the suburbs to go skiing or snowboarding. They only have to go as far as the Olympic Park.

The management of the National Stadium, popularly called the Bird's Nest, recently announced it will transform the Olympic venue into the city's biggest skiing facility, which will operate from December 19 through February 20 next year.

As part of the plan, 5,000 seats from the stadium's south area will be removed to make way for a 20-meter-high man-made hill and 80-meter-long ski lanes. Visitors can enter the ski area through five tunnels in the building's south; one will be specially designated for children.

The stadium's north end has been allocated for group performances; the middle for free-style skiing. The east and west sides of the stadium will be a sight-seeing area with ice sculptures.

Eight huge snowmakers are already at the stadium while its staff



The stadium is separated into different areas.

Photo by Li Shi

is undergoing a month-long training in Shunyi District. The management is expecting 10,000 to 15,000 visitors a day.

Yang Cheng, the stadium's assistant manager, said people who have no skiing experience are welcome; trainers are on hand to help.

Visitors can bring their own gear, although the venue will also rent equipment at the south entrance.

The venue, however, will rarely stay open in the evenings because of the high electrical cost of 200,000 yuan a night, Yang said.

The National Stadium

Where: Inside the Olympic Park, 9 Tianchen Dong Lu, Chaoyang District

Open: December 19 to February 20, 9 am – 6 pm (weekdays); 9 am – 9:30 pm (weekends and holidays)
Tel: 6490 2165

Cost: 120 yuan on weekdays; 180 yuan on weekends and holidays; 100 yuan on weekdays and 160 on weekends for students, military officers and the disabled; children below 1.2 meters enter for free

Xicheng's Guanyuan flower and pet market closing this month

By Annie Wei

On December 21, the Guanyuan market in Fuchengmen Nei Avenue, one of the city's best known flower and pet markets, will shut down for maintenance, its management announced. But market officials refused to say if it will reopen.

The Beijing Youth Daily Tuesday reported that the 12-year-old market has become a fire hazard, citing aging electric wires and poor fire-fighting equipment. The newspaper also said the place has become the haunt of many illegal pet vendors.

Beijingers have flocked to the market in the past decade to shop for pets such as birds, fish, turtles, guinea pigs and cats and accessories like fish tanks, bird cages and kennels.

Shopkeepers have begun moving out ahead of the closure and have slashed the prices of their goods.

A number of shop owners told Beijing Today they are moving to



Vendors move out of Guanyuan market in Xicheng District.

Photo by Wang Xiaoxi

the Guanyuan market in Zizhuqiao, Haidian District, a similarly popular place among local shoppers. Other vendors said they were going to Panjiayuan antique market, but said they hoped their original base would reopen.

Other Beijing markets charge lessees a much rate compared with Guanyuan's 5 yuan per square meter monthly rent.

Some pet lovers regretted the market's closure, saying it was not only a business location: it supported Beijing's pet culture by proving a place where people could exchange stories and information about raising pets amid an old Beijing ambience.

Guanyuan Market – Fuchengmen

Where: Southeast side of Guanyuan Bridge, Fuchengmen Bei Dajie, Xicheng District

Open: 9 am – 5 pm
Tel: 6400 3656

Guanyuan Market – Haidian

Where: 5 Guanyuanfa, Haidian District

Open: 9 am – 5 pm
Tel: 6868 7210

Shilihe Market

Where: North of Shilihe Bridge, Dongsanhuan, Chaoyang District

Open: 8 am – 5:30 pm
Tel: 8736 4458

ASK Beijing Today

Email your questions to: weiyi@ynet.com

Is there a dentist in town that makes Invisalign or similar "invisible" braces? I only have minor issues with my teeth's alignment and would prefer not to install a mouthful of metal for a few gaps.

There are many dental clinics that do ceramic braces – both in Chinese and foreign-run hospitals like Arrail, Vista, Baley & Jackson and Smile and Unite Family Hospital. Ceramic braces cost between 20,000 and 30,000 yuan, while the more "visible" variety is cheaper and starts at 10,000 yuan.

Most foreign practices have English-speaking dentists. Try calling to arrange an initial visit and see what the dentist will advise. It normally takes a year and a half to straighten teeth's alignment.

Do you know of a good office supply store in town? I've been to a few and their choices are rather limited.

Try purchasing online at Office Depot (officedepot.com.cn/buy/bj/ or en.officedepot.com.cn).

I'm looking for fresh cranberries and dried ones, preferably organic and with no added sugar. Do you know where I can find them in Beijing? What are they called in Mandarin?

Cranberries are called *manyue-mei* in Chinese. They are not a popular fruit in Beijing, so you won't find them in fruit and vegetable markets. The frozen kind are available at Jenny Lou's grocery store.

I'm planning to take the GMAT exam this year and I think I need to take a course. Is there any place in Beijing where I can study the GMAT preparation course taught in English?

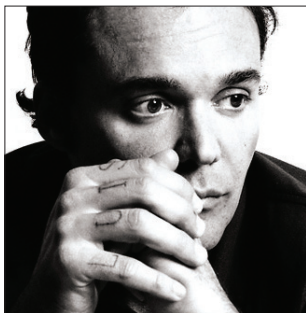
The Princeton Review has a good book *Cracking the GMAT* – get a copy from Amazon.com, or eBay. Or they might sell the book at TPR Beijing. Check tprbeijing.com/eng/. Their classes are mostly conducted in English, since the test is in English and the purpose of taking the test is to get into an English-speaking business school.

Also, you might find a Chinese student who has high GMAT scores to tutor your math.

It's getting freezing and my landlord asked me to pre-pay the heating fee. But a lot of my friends who rent an apartment in town do not have to pay for that. I want to know what the fair price for heating in Beijing is.

Before you sign the lease contract, you have to make it clear whether the rent covers heating or not. For the heating fee, Beijing government states that heating supplied from Beijing heating cooperation costs 24 yuan for each square meter of the unit. Other means are even cheaper. The size of your apartment should be clearly noted in the contract.

(By Wei Ying)



David LaChapelle, 2006
Photo by Thomas Schweigert

The photographer who ran away



Madonna Devotional Pose
Chromogenic Print 1998 ©David LaChapelle

Fitting the scene

LaChapelle came to Beijing for the first time last Thursday. He arrived looking tired, and headed for the China Central Academy of Fine Arts after a media ambush. Armed with two interpreters, he plopped down on a sofa on the school's main stage.

The 46-year-old photographer came dressed in a black baseball jacket and a pair of dark red pants. Inside the jacket was a T-shirt of Michael Jackson, the celebrity he most wanted to photograph.

But Jackson is dead and so is LaChapelle's career as a celebrity photographer. His latest work, *And No Message Could Have Been Any Clearer*, was used as the poster for his events in China. In the picture, Jackson steps on a devil with a pair of white wings.

"The red devil stands for the world – all the bad things and the experiences he has been through," LaChapelle says.

Jackson's photo is one of LaChapelle's less critical. He is better known for his anti-celebrity style best exemplified in a photo of Lil' Kim being branded by Louis Vuitton.

LaChapelle was born in Connecticut in 1963. His mother was born in Lithuania and emigrated to the US after World War II and his father grew up in the Depression. Their hardships made the two wary of their son's artistic inclinations.

As a boy, he used to hide in the school art room during lunch. Years later, he trained as a fine artist at North Carolina School of the Arts before moving to New York. Upon his arrival, he enrolled

in both the Art Students League and the School of Visual Arts.

"When I graduated from art school, I tried to work for the galleries but my works didn't sell well. Then I got this idea in my head that magazines were like a gallery and if you got your magazine page out and someone stuck it on their refrigerator, then that was a museum – someone's private museum," LaChapelle says.

Dali in fashion

Before LaChapelle moved to New York, he spent time in London in the early 1980s. That was when he invented a style so intriguing that celebrities were falling all over themselves to pose for him.

His shoots almost always went over budget, but the work meant so much to him that he would pay the difference out of pocket.

So it began.

However, not all his subjects agreed with his interest in undressed women and the surreal colors. Hip-hop singer Missy Elliott refused to dress up as Aunt Jemima, the black mascot of an American pancake flour brand. In the end, she agreed to be shot eating cereal in typical hip-hop bling-bling style. Christina Ricci took the place of Thora Birch as his snow queen when the other actress rejected the offer.

Unlike other photographers in the digital era, LaChapelle rarely turns to the computer for help. In his 1996's *Alexander McQueen & Isabella Blow: Burning Down the House*, the designer dressed as a

By Wang Yu

It takes a special sort of photographer to make celebrities like Lil' Kim, Angelina Jolie, Eminem and Drew Barrymore strip.

That photographer is David LaChapelle.

The artist was tapped by Andy Warhol after his graduation from art school and found work with *Interview* magazine. That position kick-started his 25-year career of capturing the intimate side of Hollywood.

Most readers have never heard of him, though they have probably seen his work: famous shots like a Jesus-esque portrait of Kanye West on the cover of *Rolling Stone* magazine. He also shot ads for many fashion companies.

Outside the darkroom, he directs music videos. He won MTV's Best Pop Video for No Doubt's "It's My Life" and directed Elton John's concert *The Red Piano* at Las Vegas' Caesars Palace in 2004.

But four years ago, he abdicated that life and fled to the jungles of Hawaii. He could no longer bear the celebrity worship of mainstream America, turning instead to the galleries which gave him his first failure.



Alexander McQueen & Isabella Blow – Burning Down the House
Chromogenic Print 1996 ©David LaChapelle

woman running away from a flaming castle. The flames were a real fire set by the photographer.

His attitude as a rebel in the fashion scene helped him win fans in China. Analyses of LaChapelle's works are commonly the subject of papers at local art schools despite the artist being on the other side of the planet.

People remember Andy Warhol, the Beatles and other artists rather

than politicians. To LaChapelle, it says how much more the artists achieve in creating a message that transcends borders.

Back to the gallery

After becoming one of the world's most prominent photographers, LaChapelle expanded his work to include music videos, live theatrical events and documentary films. His directing credits include music videos for Amy Winehouse, Elton John, Christina Aguilera, Moby, Jennifer Lopez, Britney Spears and The Vines. "It's My Life," by No Doubt, featuring Gwen Stefani, won the award for best pop video at the MTV Music Video Awards and LaChapelle himself won the MPVA's Director of the Year award in 2004.

Elton John's *The Red Piano* already mentioned above the top-selling show in Las Vegas for 2004. His burgeoning interest in film inspired him make the short documentary *Krumped*, an award-winner at Sundance from which he developed *RIZE*, a documentary which follows an interview schedule of two related dance sub-cultures in Los Angeles: clowning and krumping.

LaChapelle says that Pop Art is an art that reaches people and its methods have changed over the years. But it is a scene so entrenched in the beautiful if hardly provides fertile ground for art to grow.

In 2005, after his last series of fashion photos *The House At The End Of The World*, LaChapelle left

behind Hollywood and his fame.

"I love beauty. I love fashion. Even now I do. But when buying things became everything, I could not betray myself," he says. A quiet life gave him space to devote himself fully into the creation of art rather than looking for opportunities to speak out in the fashion magazines.

Art and business both co-exist and compete with each other in every artist's mind. But there is no clear boundary between them. LaChapelle used to shoot weddings for wild brides to earn a living. That commercial success gave him the money to pursue his own ideas.

"You have to do what you have to do to keep your art alive," LaChapelle says.

LaChapelle showed some of his early photos at the school. When one of his friends died of AIDS, he created a chain of pictures of the surviving friends and hung them on the wall. The photo represented the chain of life and death in the young man's mind.

However years ago, in that jungle in Hawaii, LaChapelle was shocked when someone asked him to work with a gallery.

"I felt like reborn there. When I think about what I have been through, I thank God for making me so unsuccessful in my early years when working for the galleries, because I wasn't really prepared at all," LaChapelle says.

His 25-year career was merely time spent in the school of magazines, and now he thinks he is qualified to return to the galleries. His touring exhibition will come to Asia next year.



A Taste of Power
Chromogenic Print 1995 ©David LaChapelle

Archangel Michael: And No Message Could Have Been Any Clearer

Chromogenic Print 2009 ©David LaChapelle



Nairobi to Shenzhen, love in the East

By Han Manman

While they share the same father, US President Barack Obama and his half brother Mark Otho Obama Ndesandjo have very different feelings and memories of the man.

Ndesandjo, a 43-year-old businessman and musician, has hidden in southern China for years. But he recently emerged with a semi-autobiographical novel, *Nairobi to Shenzhen: A Novel of Love in the East*, that reflects his wanderings, his question of racial identity, his quest to find acceptance in modern China, and, mostly, his abusive and erratic father, the figure absent in the US President's bestselling memoir.

In the 255-page novel (\$16.95), self-published through Aventine Press, Ndesandjo details his drive to make peace with his father, a Kenyan goat herder who died in an car accident in 1982.

Ndesandjo's character in the book is called David. The author depicts his Kenyan father as an abusive alcoholic who beats David and his Jewish American mother.

In the novel, Ndesandjo invents his father's diary, which gives the protagonist insight into his father's philandering, outbursts and the self-destructive decline that paralleled Kenya's descent into corruption and tribal conflict.

"It's a work of fiction, but there's a lot going on in there that parallels my life," Ndesandjo said. While he said that some of the characters are composites, many scenes echo his experience as a victim of and witness to domestic violence.

Like his novel's main character, Ndesandjo's mother was an American Jew, Ruth Ndesandjo, Barack Obama Sr.'s third wife. Ruth met the elder Obama in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and then followed him to Africa. Ruth, who still lives in Nairobi, had two sons. The other, David, died in a motorcycle accident.

"My father beat me. He beat my mother. And you just don't do that," Ndesandjo said. "I shut those thoughts in the back of my mind for many years."

Ndesandjo said his late father, characterized by his mother as a brilliant man, was a social failure. "I remember times in my house when I would hear screams and I would hear my mother's pain," he said.

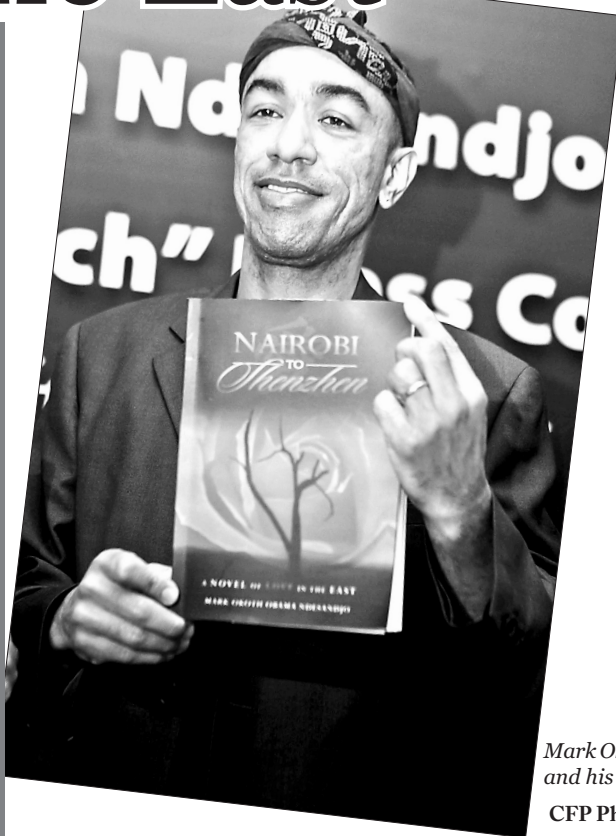
Even though Obama, in his book *Dreams of My Father*, echoes Ndesandjo's criticisms of their father as a drunk who showed no concern for his wife and children, he admired him as talented, confident, humorous and brave.

At the end of his memoir, Obama weeps at the grave of his father in a cathartic moment. "I felt the circle finally close," he wrote. "The pain I felt was my father's pain."

The main reason may be because President Obama hardly knew his father, who left home when Obama was two. He saw his father only once after his parents' divorce, and that was when he was 10. His impression is one created by his mother and her relatives.

Over the past decade, as Obama's political career took him to the apex of power, Ndesandjo's life fell apart, and then slowly came together again.

In 2001, shortly after September 11, he left the US to start a new life in China. He taught English and gave piano lessons to orphans. Last year he married a Chinese woman. In his novel, he tells how David falls in love with a beautiful Chinese woman named Spring, but must still deal with the lingering pains of the violence he suffered as a child.



Mark Otho Obama Ndesandjo and his new book

CFP Photo

The myth of a house built on sand

By Charles Zhu

If you want to know how the world went from the beautiful, almost fundamentalist idea of the rational market to financial disaster, check out Justin Fox's recent book *The Myth of the Rational Market* (382pp, Harper Business/Harper Collins Publishers, \$27.99), a must-read for anyone who wants to understand the current financial mess as Paul Krugman says.

Justin Fox, a business and economics columnist for *Time*, chronicles the rise and fall of the efficient market theory and the arrival of the modern financial industry. He offers a cultural history of the pros and cons of risk. The book tells of the people and ideas that helped shape modern finance and investment, from the early days of Wall Street through the financial disaster of today. It's a tale of Wall Street's evolution and the power of the market to generate wealth and wreak havoc.

In the book, Fox explains how the financial system was built and why there are so few who will acknowledge it as a house built on sand. He traces the current recession from the erroneous academic theory known as the efficient-market hypothesis.

The hypothesis grew to become a powerful myth. It has been the maker and loser of fortunes, the driver of trillions of dollars, the inspiration for vast new derivative markets and the guidepost for thousands of careers. The theory holds that the market is always right, and that the decisions of millions of rational investors, all acting on information to outperform one another, always provide the best assessment of a stock's value.

In other words, prices on the exchange instantly and accurately reflect available information about publicly traded securities. As Eugene Fama of the Chicago Business School said, "Actual market prices are, on the basis of all available informa-

tion, best estimates of intrinsic value." He held that real-world financial markets are efficient, or very nearly so.

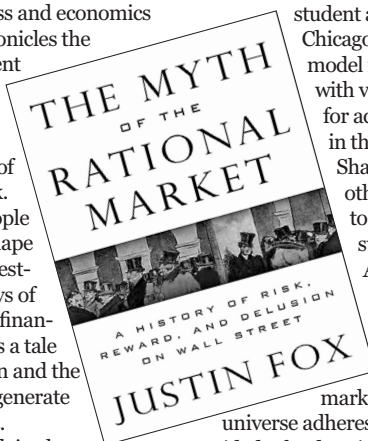
But Fox slams this belief as "the most remarkable error in the history of economic theory." He focuses on how the economics professors make such errors possible by proposing such hypotheses, rather than lumping blame on the errors and abuses of Wall Street bankers.

Harry Markowitz, a graduate student at the University of Chicago, offered an alternative model in 1952. He equated risk with variance, the basic model for advising investors. Then in the mid-1960's William Sharpe, Merton Miller and other economist went on to develop the theory of stock prices, the Capital Assets Pricing Model. That model has become dogma for Wall Street.

This faith in the supremacy of the market and that the financial universe adheres to absolute laws is misguided. The doctrine states that prices cannot be wrong; if they are, someone would profit from the error and correct it. Exponents of the theory decree that if prices are unforeseeable, then the future direction of the market is random. If the market was truly random, then its prices should follow a bell-curve distribution.

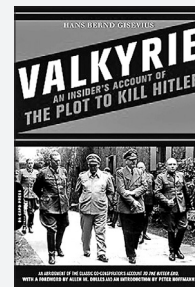
Fox says believers in the market's efficiency suffered from a "blinkered" mindset and "tunnel vision." "If you do come up with an idea for beating the market, you need a model that explains why everybody else isn't already doing the same thing," he says.

There were theorists who criticized the efficient markets hypothesis. Among them was Robert Shiller who, on the basis of statistics, predicted both the crash in the dot.com stocks and the housing bubble and bust. Lawrence Summers, the former president of Harvard University and now a senior official in the Obama administration, simply said in one of his papers, "There are idiots. Look around."



CNPIEC Bookstore book listing

The China National Publication Import and Export Corporation's (CNPIEC) bookstore recommends these new arrivals to *Beijing Today* readers.



Valkyrie: An Insider's Account of the Plot to Kill Hitler

By Hans Bernd Gisevius, 272pp, Da Capo Press, 110 yuan

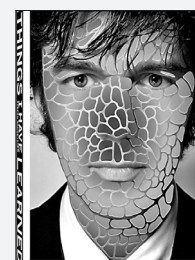
When on July 20, 1944, a bomb – boldly placed inside Hitler's headquarters by Colonel Count Claus von Stauffenberg – exploded without killing the Fuhrer, the subsequent coup d'état against the Third Reich collapsed. The conspirators were summarily shot or condemned in show trials and hanged. One of the few survivors of the conspiracy was Hans Bernd Gisevius, who had used his position in the Gestapo and the Abwehr to further the anti-Nazi plot.



The Modern Impulse: Peter L. Gluck and Partners

Edited by Joseph Giovannini, 680pp, ORO Editions, 445 yuan

Peter L. Gluck and Partners, located in New York City since 1972, is known for its integrity of design and sensitivity to the relationship between architectural form and context. Rather than specializing in a particular building type or specific architectural style, the firm provides designs to meet difficult and conflicting requirements, and has designed homes, schools, churches, community centers and universities throughout the US.



Things I have learned in my life so far

By Stefan Sagmeister, 248pp, Abrams, 298 yuan

This book began as a list designer Stefan Sagmeister made in his diary, which included statements such as "Worrying solves nothing" and "Trying to look good limits my life." The list reveals something that is profoundly true: although humans have been pursuing happiness for countless generations, it remains elusive.

(By He Jianwei)

Grassroots investigators check in to check out

By Wang Yu

If you travel a lot, it can be tough to settle on a hotel that is affordable and offers good service.

But netizen volunteers are trying out and reviewing new hotels in every city, from the popular Home Inns to luxurious five-star joints like the Beijing Hotel. At each stop, they challenge the patience of the staff, sample the food and write about the hotel's traffic conditions before filing a report on their blog.

Several travel websites are sponsoring these visits as a marketing strategy. The volunteer sets his itinerary and the travel site foots the bill.



At the Beijing Hotel, everyday is expensive.



Hotel G on Gongti offers free fruit.



The air conditioner works well in the youth hotel.



This migrant worker stayed a night at the Beijing Hotel.



Breakfast at the youth hotel, 22 yuan.

Photos by Mac Ma



This Qianmen hotel has a comfortable lounge.

Living out of a suitcase

When Vincent Li saw a travel website was looking for volunteer travelers, he registered without hesitation. All he had to do was to record and share his travel experience and submit a plan to spend 20 nights at 20 hotels over 30 days.

Selected participants would be given 10,000 yuan for the whole month.

"The criteria were very strict. Anyone who has worked in the hotel industry was immediately disqualified. You also needed to have a reputable identity online. But most importantly, you had to have traveled a lot. It was like being selected as a gourmet," Li says.

After several phone calls, Li was rejected. Mac Ma, well-known online as the "Shanzhai Journalist," was accepted. In January, Mac Ma wrote an investigative report about the Robin Hood mobile phone industry on tianya.cn, a popular forum. Ma moved from Beijing to Shenzhen and took a job with a Robin Hood maker to start his investigation. During the next three months, he wrote 40 articles about the conditions.

After finding notoriety on the Internet, he quit the former job and started this new investigation which he calls "season 2."

"I'd like to define myself as a grassroots reporter who discovers the inside stories of the products and services around us. I've traveled to many places and have experience with all kinds of hotels," Ma says.

No resting on the job

Ma's hotel tour in Beijing started November 23 at a popular chain. At first, he tried to book a room in a

Home Inn near the China World Trade Center, but there were few rooms left and the hotel required his credit card number as collateral. Since he thought the policy was strange, he switched to its branch at Guangqumen.

Ma spent one day in the hotel from afternoon to noon the next day. It was not an easy job for a lone guest to judge the service of a hotel in less than 24 hours. But in that time he focused on its hygienic condition, the attitude of its staff, security, traffic, food prices and the ability to deal with an emergency.

"I was lucky to win the chance to investigate using someone else's money. But from day one, I always found there wasn't enough time. It took me two hours to take photos and another two to do interviews and observe the regular service. Then I had to spend five hours writing the report and uploading the photos. My efficiency depended on the Internet connection and the hotel," Ma says.

His next two stops were at high class hotels on Chang'an Jie and Gongti West Street. The price was much higher — about 1,000 yuan plus a service charge of 15 percent on top of the total room fee. He says it was expensive, but not worth the money. The hotel on Gongti served so little food that he had to hit the street to buy *jianbing*.

When Ma was making his plans for the next hotel, he learned online that a young migrant worker was begging on the streets to make his girlfriend's New Year's wish — one night in a five-star room — come true. Ma found his phone number online, with a short blurb about the man, and called him immediately.

"He seemed a little nervous and hesitant when I explained what I was doing. I told him a night in the hotel would be his payment for helping me investigate," Ma says. The man agreed and stayed a night at the Beijing Hotel.

A marketing hype?

Many travel and hotel booking services are offering these programs in major cities all over the country. In the off-season, the price of a plane ticket is so low that winners can make all their trips using much less money than they would usually require.

But some have accused the sites of creating advertising hype. Some pages of the organizers even bear the logos of upscale hotels, which are sponsoring their offers. Hotels would rather offer rooms to these grassroots investigators than keep them empty.

According to an announcement by ctrip.com, one plane ticket and hotel booking website organized a similar event, but scheduled it to begin after the off-season ended and breaking the budgets of its participants.

But Ma says no sponsors or hotels have interfered with his investigations. He met one waiter in the hotel on Gongti who earned a university diploma two years ago, but who was forced to take a service job that pays only 2,000 yuan per month after his former employer hemorrhaged staff after the financial crisis.

"I don't know whether the website is cooperating with the hotels or not. But all I am doing is recording what I've seen and keep telling the truth," Ma says.

And with that, he heads off to the next hotel.

A netizen's schedule

9-10 am Wake up: possibly before the hotel's free breakfast

10 am — noon Investigate: check the services and talk with the waiters

noon — 1 pm Check out: time to book the next hotel!

1-2 pm Lunch: then head to the next stop

2-6 pm Photos: snap shots of the hotel and try out its food. Test its Internet connection

6-12 pm File: write up and submit a report on the hotel with photos

Private party space

Where to make merry this holiday season

By Annie Wei

Now that Christmas and the New Year are just around the corner, everyone is busy looking for a venue for their private party.

Beijing Today checked out some new spots in town and found three that are ideal for company celebrations and get-together with friends. Now all you have to worry about is your dress.



Song Dynasty-style tea ceremony



Dream Garden's performances are directed by its owner Xu Fei
Photos provided by Chen Wanlu



Dream Garden's courtyard



The sitting room

Reconnecting with ancient culture

Dream Garden, located in Caochangdi art village, is humongous: it takes up 7,000 square meters in dining rooms, meeting rooms, a drama theater, an art gallery and a cinema.

Its owner Xu Fei is a performing artist and he set up Dream Garden as a place where people can soak in China's rich traditional culture.

The building is open to tours, usually late in the afternoon. Visitors are greeted at the gate with an ancient welcoming ceremony; they are sprinkled with blessed water and fanned with incense smoke. Guests are also taught the traditional way of exchanging greetings.

They are then escorted into the courtyard. Dream Garden's staff introduces the objective behind the building's design: a

place where city dwellers can momentarily forget the worries of urban life and where they can reconnect with their traditional culture.

At 6:30 pm, the beating of drums announces dinnertime. Visitors are led into private dining rooms while a guide explains the feng shui of their location, the food on the menu and the production of their home-made wine.

What impresses guests the most are the performances. The first, after dinner, is the Song Dynasty (960-1279) tea ceremony, which is simple yet profound. It shows how ancient people highly regarded tea through their careful selection of tea leaves, attention to water quality and skill in preparing the drink.

Xu says the tea ceremony originated in the Tang Dynasty (618-907) but flourished in Song. At the end of the ceremony, some visitors are invited to take a sip of the brew.

The next part, an hour-long performance highly recommended by *Beijing Today*, is composed of six sections that include dance and music. It shows the belief that all things return where they originate. Visitors leave soothed by Dream Garden's arty and dreamy ambience.

Dream Garden

Where: 256-1 Caochangdi, Chaoyang District

Tel: 6434 5559

Cost: Starting from 6,800 yuan for at least six people.

Winter lake-view from a courtyard

This open courtyard with a garden offers people respite from the crowded and noisy lanes of Houhai. The restaurant's second floor gives visitors a lovely view of the frozen lake from its balcony.

But don't be fooled by its natural surroundings and relative tranquility: it has high-tech sound and lighting systems for all kinds of group events.

Houhai No. 5

Where: 5 Houhai Beiyan, Xicheng District

Tel: 6406 1900

Cost: 2,000 yuan for a group of less than 30 people; 6,000 yuan for a group of less than 150; and 7,500 yuan for a buffet wedding reception



Houhai No. 5

Photo provided by Sina.com.cn



Studio 6 is located at Jing Yuan, Image Base outside East Fourth Ring Road.



Studio 6 has professional photo shooting equipment.

Photos provided by Studio 6

Fashionable and chic

The two-story studio of Chen Man, a leading young photographer, is a space not only for photo shoots but also for parties.

The first floor can be partitioned

off into four smaller rooms, while the second floor has a coffee lounge, a VIP room and a mingling area.

Studio 6

Where: Warehouse 6, Jing Yuan, 3

Guangqu Lu, Chaoyang District

Open: 10 am - late

Tel: 8721 5418

Cost: Starting from 20,000 yuan a day (not including electricity)

Cakes and bread for the Christmas season

New

By Zhang Dongya

BreadTalk, a Singaporean bread chain, has built a reputation for its "experimental" baked goods. For winter, it developed 37 new products, some of which were designed for the Christmas season.

The new products fall under three categories, many of which incorporate imported ingredients and exotic recipes. They will be available in all 16 Beijing stores by December 7.

Japanese elements

BreadTalk's new Japanese series, which contains distinctive Japanese elements, is made up of 10 types of bread. Bonito Fish (7 yuan), shaped like a dory fish and topped with boshi fish flakes, seaweed and wasabi egg cream, has its beginnings in the well-known Tsukiji Market in Tokyo. Japan Sweet Potato (5 yuan) is loaf bread filled with mashed sweet potato. Konichikkuwa (6 yuan) is made from Japanese fishcake and cheese. Mt. Fuji (5 yuan) is toast with kaya, or pandan jam, and fresh cream.

Bread for tea time

These are seven kinds of bread and cakes created for afternoon tea. The Refection series are stuffed with fruits and nuts like blueberry, almond and longan. We particularly like the Chocolate Brownie (8 yuan), Almond Madeline (8 yuan) and Pine Nut Longgan (10 yuan).

French country bread

This health-conscious category includes crusty French bread that uses grains like wheat, Secale cereal and barley. Secale cereal is rich in fiber, which promotes digestion and weight loss. The dark grain also strengthens the flavor of stuffings like bacon and fish. Wholegrain Walnut Toast (16 yuan) is high in fiber, Vitamin B and a natural source of zinc and iron, which helps maintain a healthy cholesterol level. Black Sesame Toast (15 yuan) is a good source of calcium.

Christmas cakes

The Genius Log Cake (128 yuan, 500 grams) is inspired by an old French tale about a poor young man who could not afford a Christmas present, so he instead sent his sweetheart a piece of log from the woods and thus, won her love. Shaped like a log and made with chocolate, this goodie is expected to bring good luck during the holidays.

Orders made before December 20 can receive 15-percent discount.

BreakTalk

Where: BBo8B, The Oriental Plaza, 1 Dongchang'an Avenue, Dongcheng District

Open: 10 am - 10 pm

Tel: 8518 6253



Chocolate Brownie, 8 yuan

Photos provided by BreadTalk



French Madeline, 8 yuan



Genius Log Cake, 128 yuan for 500 grams

Meaty Xinjiang favorites



Xinjiang black beer, 18 yuan



Stewed lamb ribs with flat bread, 68 yuan

Photos by Huang Xiao



Yoghurt, 4 yuan



Fried yam, walnuts and mushrooms, 28 yuan

By Annie Wei

Last year, a handful of young Chinese professionals teamed up to play badminton, enjoy cultural activities and try different restaurants every week. The group's name on Kaixin001.com is "feast like flowing water," a reference to the members' love of food.

This year, they decided to create a theme for their gastronomic adventures: all southern cuisine encompassing provinces from Guangxi to Guangdong.

Last Saturday, the group went to a Xinjiang restaurant called Kelamayi Dasha. It's in a building run by a Xinjiang oil company, so there's likely a connection why the restaurant chose the name Kelamayi, a Uyghur word that means "black oil."

You cannot get Xinjiang food in Beijing any more authentic than Kelamayi's, but its basement location kind of makes it inconspicuous.

Beijing Today highly recommends its Xinjiang beer and yoghurt. The Xinjiang black beer (18 yuan) has a strong flavor with a hint of brown sugar. The yoghurt (4 yuan) is served in a martini glass topped with dried grapes, slices of

tomato and cucumber and sprinkled with sesame seeds.

The group ordered donkey meat (15 yuan) for appetizers, which this writer found average. Xinjiang cuisine is known in Beijing for meat dishes like whole roast lamb (1,280 yuan), but it is usually reserved for special guests during feasts. To make it, the meat is rubbed with salt then coated with ginger, scallion, egg and pepper.

Shouzhuangrou (128 yuan for a medium portion; 198 yuan for a large portion) is sliced lamb meat eaten with the hands. Xiangcong Bachugu (218 yuan) is fried spring onion with bachu mushroom, a tender, high-nutrition mushroom that only grows in southwest Xinjiang.

The group also tried dapanji, or stewed chicken and tomato (38 yuan for a medium portion; 58 yuan for a large portion), which was a bit spicy. It was a shame the chicken did not taste very fresh.

Kelamayi Dasha

Where: 61 Andeli Lu (close to Ditan Park), Dongcheng District

Open: 11:30 am - 2:30 pm, 5:30-9 pm

Tel: 8411 3311 ext. 6602

Old Beijing according to Western artists

By Han Manman

The ongoing exhibition "Imperial City Impression – Old Peking Images in Western Prints," at the Beijing World Art Museum, is the last in the Memories of China series organized to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic.

The exhibition showcases more than 150 prints and maps and at least 10 volumes of Western reports on China. They reflect life in the ancient city during the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), including the daily preoccupation of its residents, imperial activities and big celebrations.

"There have been numerous exhibitions on old Beijing," Shi Jingsheng, director of the exhibition says, "But what distinguishes 'Imperial City Impression' is that most of the images are Western prints, which was one of the most popular methods of recording events at the time."

The exhibition is divided into four sections: Imperial Life, Folk Customs, City Scenes and

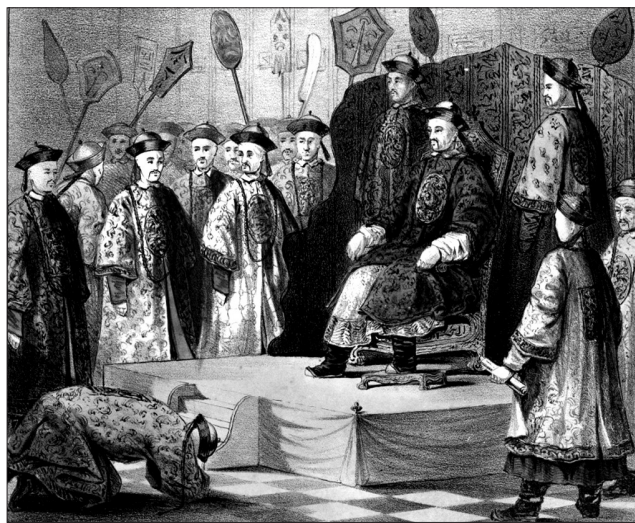


Photo provided by Beijing World Art Museum

Old Maps.

Imperial Life contains a multitude of prints that show imperial activities in late Qing from a Western perspective, such as the emperor's wedding ceremony, sacrificial rituals and officials' meetings with foreign diplomats.

One print, depicting Guangxu Emperor (1871-1908), the coun-

try's second to last imperial ruler, sledding on The Forbidden City's Taiye Lake in 1895, is among the exhibition's rarest, Shi says.

"Compared to his miserable life under the constant control of Empress Dowager Cixi, the print reveals an unusual moment when the short-lived emperor enjoyed his life," he says.

"Chinese people will remember their history and predecessors through these old images of Beijing," says Han Pu, former deputy director of the Capital Library and one of the exhibition's consultants. "I've been researching old Beijing for more than 20 years and retired just last year. When I saw these old prints, I wanted to take up my job again."

Han however says that not all the prints reflect reality in the imperial capital; their value lies in their depiction of that era's cultural exchanges between the East and West.

The exhibition ends December 13 and will then move to Hong Kong.

Imperial City Impression – Old Peking Images in Western Prints

Where: Beijing World Art Museum, A9 Fuxing Lu, Haidian District

When: Until December 13, daily, 9 am – 5 pm
Tel: 5980 2222

Upcoming

Movie

Suddenly, Last Summer

Where: Sculpting in Time (inside Beihang University), 37 Xueyuan Lu, Haidian District

When: 7 pm

Admission: 15 yuan

Tel: 8231 0664

Stage in January

Concert

The Mozart Symphony Orchestra of London New Year Concert

Where: Haidian Theater, 84 Huangzhuang Lu, Haidian District
When: January 1, 2010, 7:30 pm
Admission: 80-1,680 yuan
Tel: 8253 3588

The Vienna Johann Strauss Orchestra New Year Concert

Where: Century Theater, 40 Liangmaqiao Lu, Chaoyang District
When: January 1, 2010, 7:30 pm
Admission: 180-880 yuan
Tel: 6466 3015

Southern Arizona Symphony Orchestra

Where: Poly Theater, 14 Dongzhimen Nan Dajie, Dongcheng District

When: January 4, 2010, 7:30 pm
Admission: 100-800 yuan
Tel: 6551 8058

The Blue Danube – Youth Chamber Philharmonic NRW of Germany

Where: Forbidden City Music Hall (inside Zhongshan Park), 4 Zhonghua Lu, Dongcheng District
When: January 10, 2010, 7:30 pm

Admission: 30-580 yuan
Tel: 6559 8306

Berlin Philharmonic String Quartet

Where: Concert Hall of the National Center for the Performing Arts, 2 Xi Chang'an Jie, Xicheng District

When: January 13-14, 2010, 7:30 pm
Admission: 180-680 yuan
Tel: 6655 0000

The Merry Widow – China Philharmonic Orchestra 2009-2010 Season

Where: Poly Theater, 14 Dongzhimen Nan Dajie, Dongcheng District

When: January 22-24, 2010, 7:30 pm
Admission: 80-880 yuan
Tel: 6551 8058

Dance

Carmen

Where: Opera House of the National Center for the Performing Arts, 2 Xi Chang'an Jie, Xicheng District

When: January 1-2, 2010, 7:30 pm
Admission: 280-1,280 yuan
Tel: 6655 0000

The Sovereign's Night by the China Oriental Song and Dance Ensemble

Where: Poly Theater, 14 Dongzhimen Nan Dajie, Dongcheng District

When: January 26-31, 2010, 7:30 pm
Admission: 180-1,000 yuan
Tel: 6551 8058

5 Friday, December 4

Exhibition

Paper Furniture Exhibition

Where: Original Design Circle, The Village, 11 Sanlitun Lu, Chaoyang District

When: Until December 18, daily, 10 am – 10 pm
Admission: Free
Tel: 6417 6110

Zhang Donghong Solo Exhibition

Where: Today Art Museum, Building 4, Pingod Community, 32 Baizhuan Lu, Chaoyang District

When: Until December 7, daily, 10 am – 5 pm
Admission: 20 yuan
Tel: 5876 0600

Movie

Apology

Where: Blend Coffee, Room 1354, 2/F Building 13, Jianwai SOHO West, 39 Dongsanhuan Zhong Lu, Chaoyang District

When: 7 pm
Admission: Free
Tel: 5869 5030

The Hidden Blade

Where: MoBox Books Life,

288 Chengfu Lu, Haidian District

When: 7 pm

Admission: Spend at least 10 yuan on a drink
Tel: 8261 8538

Nightlife



Hao Fei'er's First CD

Where: Star Live, 3/F Tango, 79 Heping Xi Jie, Dongcheng District

When: 9 pm

Admission: 100 yuan
Tel: 6402 5080

Papier Tiger, Subs and IDH

Where: Yugongyishan, 3-2 Zhangzizhong Lu, Dongcheng District

When: 8:30 pm

Admission: 60 yuan
Tel: 8402 8477

6 Saturday, December 5

Exhibition

Boundless – Chinese Ink Painting Exhibition

Where: Jiu Shi Space, 798 Art District, 2 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang District

When: Until January 5, 2010, daily except Monday, 11 am – 6 pm
Admission: Free
Tel: 8456 0467

Breaking Forecast

Where: Ullens Center for Contemporary Art (UCCA), 798 Art District, 2 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang District

When: Until February 28, 2010, daily except Monday, 10 am – 7 pm
Admission: 15 yuan
Tel: 8459 9269

Movie

Ancient Species

Where: 5/F Wenjin Hotel, Tsinghua Science Park, 1 Zhongguancun Dong Lu, Haidian District

When: 4:30 pm
Admission: Free
Tel: 6252 5566

Seasons in the Sun

Where: Cherry Cafe, Yu'er

Hutong, Nan Luogu Xiang, Dongcheng District

When: 7 pm

Admission: 15 yuan
Tel: 15801672438

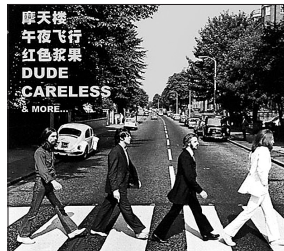
Nightlife

Private Words in Winter

Where: Weibozhiyan Club, Room 2308, 3/F North Building, SOHO Shangdu, 8 Dongdaqiao Lu, Chaoyang District

When: 8 pm

Admission: 40 yuan
Tel: 5900 0969



Tribute to the Beatles and John Lennon

Where: MAO Live House, 111 Gulou Dong Dajie, Dongcheng District

When: 8 pm

Admission: 60 yuan
Tel: 6402 5080

Sunday, December 6

Exhibition

A Matter of No Consequence

Where: Poetry Cafe, 15 Nanchizi Dajie, Dongcheng District

When: Until December 20, daily, 10 am – 10 pm
Admission: Free
Tel: 6525 6505

Take off the Armor's Mountain – Shi Jinsong Solo Exhibition

Where: Space Station, 798 Art District, 2 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang District

When: Until January 10, 2010, daily except Monday, 10

am – 10 pm

Admission: Free
Tel: 5978 9671

Nightlife

Gangzi and Bloody Woods

Where: D-22, 242 Chengfu Lu, Haidian District

When: 9 am

Admission: 40 yuan; 30 yuan for students
Tel: 6264 3177

Final Battle in Black Winter Night

Where: MAO Live House, 111 Gulou Dong Dajie, Dongcheng District

When: 7:30 pm

Admission: 50 yuan
Tel: 6402 5080



Neo Tokyo Samurai Black World Tour 2009

Where: Star Live, 3/F

Tango, 79 Heping Xi Jie, Dongcheng District

When: 7 pm
Admission: 350 yuan, 800 yuan
Tel: 6402 5080

Movie

The Disposable Film Festival

Where: Penghao Theater, 35 Dongmianhua Hutong, Jiaodakou Nan Dajie, Dongcheng District

When: 2-6 pm
Admission: 30 yuan
Tel: 5129 0082

(By Jackie Zhang)

Eye drops not for casual use

By Venus Lee

Eye drops may be the best friend of office workers worried about their vision after hours in front of the computer.

Some frequently use eye drops when resting their eyes regardless of whether their eyes are red, dry or tired, and some share eye drops. But experts warn such random abuse of eye drops could contribute to vision loss.

A link to glaucoma

Zhang Xin, 34, a graphic designer, began feeling discomfort in her eyes half a year ago. She bought eye drops at the pharmacy and found quick relief after using them. But plopping a few drops every time she got up from her desk quickly became a habit because of its cooling effects. Recently, she felt her eyes were becoming swollen and her vision was blurring. A trip to the doctor turned up a diagnosis of glaucoma.

Glaucoma is one of several diseases that causes progressive damage to the optic nerve which is responsible for conveying images to the brain. It is one of the most common causes of irreversible blindness.

"Though glaucoma is an eye disease generally linked with aging, the misuse of steroid-based eye drops is affecting the younger generation," said Dou Hongliang, chief optometrist at the Third Hospital of Peking University. "In the clinic, we often find many young patients who have eye diseases because they have been abusing eye drops for a long time."

Most glaucoma patients show no symptoms until the disease is into an advanced stage. If left undetected and untreated, it can cause permanent blindness due to nerve damage.

"The disease generally has no symptoms, so we strongly recommend regular screening of patients who use glasses. There is still no cure for the disease, but with the help of the latest laser treatments, surgical techniques and medicines, we can control it. The earlier a patient comes to us, the better," Dou said.

He said the hospital receives 100 new patients with glaucoma every week. Around 10 percent of them have been abusing eye drops or ointments. "This is certainly avoidable if an expert is directing them rather than letting them self-medicate with over-the-counter drugs," the doctor said.

Picking the right eye drops

Most pharmacies stock more than a dozen eye drops to relieve almost any symptom. From eye drops for red eyes to dry eyes and even pink eye, there are plenty to use. But with so many eye drops available, it can be difficult to select the right one.

1. For dry eyes

The eye depends on a constant flow of tears to provide moisture and lubrication. Tears are a combination of water, oils, mucus and antibodies with special proteins. These components are secreted by glands around the eye. When there is an imbalance in this tear system, a person may have dry eyes.

"Whenever air conditioning, heat or strong winds dry out the air, or when someone uses the computer for too long, their eyes will dry out and start to tear. This condition is called dry eye, and some people experience it chronically," Dou said.

The use of artificial tears is the primary treatment for dry eye. Artificial teardrops are available over the counter. No one drop works for everyone, so it may be necessary to try several. "If you have chronic dry eyes, it is important to use the drops even when your eyes feel fine. If your eyes dry out while you sleep, you can use a thicker lubricant, such as an ointment, at night," he said.

Dry eye drop manufacturers include Visine, Bausch & Lomb and Theratears. "You may find the simpler ones just as effective, but drops designed like natural tears are better. It usually depends on the person," he said.

For chronic dry eyes, Allergan makes Restasis, a prescription drop designed to relieve chronic dryness.

2. For red and itchy eyes

Red, itchy eyes can be caused by a variety of factors. For most people it is the sign of an allergy. In spring and summer, your eye irritation is most likely being caused by an allergic reaction.

Many things can cause an allergic reaction. Some airborne allergens that can cause eye problems include dust, pollen, pet dander and mold. Other things like facial cosmetics and medications can also cause a reaction when used near the eyes.

"Medications for allergies can be found in both pill and liquid solutions. Depending on the severity and persistence of your allergic reaction, you may need to see the doctor for a prescription," Dou said.

Over-the-counter treatments are less expensive and less powerful than their prescription counterparts.

Anti-allergenic drops cleanse the eye of pollen and mold and help to reduce redness.

For itchy eyes or red eyes caused by allergic reactions or late nights, there are also plenty of eye drops with antihistamines and other relief elements. Useful brands include Visine-A, Clear Eyes ACR and Bausch & Lomb's Opcon-A.

But the number one thing you should do if you are suffering from eye problems is to remove the allergen from your environment or leave the area. If you are experiencing an allergic reaction while being outside, you can wear a pair of wrap-around sunglasses to protect your eyes from pollen.

3. For serious conditions

If you have ever had pink eye, then you know what an annoyance it can be. One new over-the-counter eye drop can help combat the condition: Similasan's Pink Eye Relief. "For pink eye that will not go away, a prescription eye drop might be more useful," Dou said.

For many serious eye conditions like glaucoma, there are prescription eye drops designed to help relieve symptoms. The prescription eye drop OptiPranolol is designed to help decrease the pressure in the eye, which is important for people with glaucoma. For other conditions such as lazy eye, cataracts or post-surgical treatment, other drops are available.

Guidelines for using eye drops

It is important to know how to use them correctly to not waste the drops and increase their effectiveness.

1. Tilt your head back.
2. Carefully pull down your lower eyelid, creating a little pocket, and look up.
3. Gently squeeze one drop into the pocket.
4. Let go of your lower lid, close your eye and use a finger to gently press against the corner of your eye near your nose. Keep it there for at least two minutes. This will help prevent the medication from dripping out or draining into your sinuses.

Caution:

1. Never share eye drops. It can spread infection and lead to complications if you use the wrong medication.
2. Always wash your hands before and after using eye drops.
3. Read the label to see if you need to shake the bottle.
4. If you are taking more than one type of eye drop, ask your doctor how long you should wait between using each type.
5. Don't touch the tip of the bottle or put it down on any surface. Replace the cap as soon as you are finished.

CFP Photo



Another look at shadow walls

A mark of traditional Beijing architecture

By Charles Zhu

One local tour you can do this season is to visit the city's *hutong* and take stock of their extraordinary, yet sadly vanishing, architecture. Whether they are homes of royalty or ordinary folk, most courtyard residences have a shadow wall, or *yingbi*, which usually stands behind the main gate, shielding the house from onlookers.

Shadow walls can be traced back to the Western Zhou Dynasty (1046-256 BC). According to the *Classic of Rites*, a Confucian text that describes the social norms, rites and court ceremonies of the period, only temples and the abode of the king and other royalty could have shadow walls.

Another story links the wall to a legend. Nurhaci, the founding ruler of the Qing Dynasty (1616-1911), once worked as a servant for a military officer of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). One day, when Nurhaci brought his master warm water to wash his feet, he was surprised to find the officer had three red spots on his soles. The officer told him it was a foretelling that he would become a commanding general in the army. Nurhaci casually said he

had seven red spots on his soles, a sign of emperors.

After hearing this, the officer decided he needed to kill Nurhaci before he gained power. One of the officer's concubines learned of the plot and urged Nurhaci to run away with a black horse and a dog. Days later, the horse and the dog both died of fatigue and Nurhaci fell to the ground in exhaustion. Suddenly, a huge flock of crows swooped down on him and covered his body. The pursuing Qing soldiers, thinking that only a corpse would attract so many crows, withdrew.

When he regained consciousness, Nurhaci fled to the Changbai Mountains in the northeast and survived by digging wild ginseng. Later, he unified the Manchurian tribe and led them in toppling the Ming Dynasty.

As thanks to the faithful dog that protected their emperor during his flight, Manchurians decided to stop eating dog meat. They also built shadow walls in their homes in memory of Nurhaci's days of hard labor in the mountains. In front of the wall they erected a post where they hung pork and grains for the crows.

Distinguishing feature of Beijing courtyards

The shadow wall, which may also be located before the courtyard's main gate, is one of the distinguishing features of Beijing courtyard architecture. It is typically shaped straight across or like the wing of a flying wild goose. Some, like those at the entrance to Zhongnanhai, stand on either side of the gate in the shape of a 八, the character for "eight," creating an imposing atmosphere.

The wall's length, width and thickness, and the patterns painted or carved on it announce the social status of the homeowner. Shadow walls are generally 2 meters high, a third of a meter thick and are made of bricks or stones over a foundation of rocks. Those in the homes of top officials or gentry are higher and thicker. A visitor wishing to enter the courtyard is expected to politely announce his presence from behind the wall.

A cavern where the God of the Earth is worshipped is usually built behind the wall. In Manchurian families, a *suolun*, or godly post, is erected in front of the wall.

Continued on page 21...



Shadow wall made from granulite at Beihai Park



Flower patterns on a stone shadow wall
Photos by Jason Wang



Shadow wall with the character fu at the former residence of novelist Lao She
Photos by Yezi



A large shadow wall in Fayuan Temple

... continued from page 20

Shield against ghosts

The wall also has another function. People in the old days were extremely superstitious and believed malevolent ghosts roamed at night while folks slept. But they believed that if their home had a shadow wall, the ghosts would not be able to enter and harm them.

As a reflection of Confucian, Buddhist and Taoist teachings, the walls were bedecked with propitious paintings or carvings of animals and plants such as crane, deer, elephants, bats, plums, chrysanthemums, lotuses, peonies and bamboo, which signify longevity, friendship, happiness and good fortune.

The patterns use puns to express good wishes – quick wit that gets lost in English translation. Magpies perched on a tree branch means “a smile on the eyebrow.” A drawing of an egret and a lotus together expresses wishes for success in all levels of the civil examinations. A lion playing with an embroidered ball mean “many good things will arrive.”

Other designs denote legendary stories with a moral value. For instance, there is a wall carved with a strange animal that is so greedy it eats everything in sight. One day, it goes to the sea and attempts to eat the glowing, beckoning sun. It ends up drowning instead. The tale reminds the homeowner and his offspring that greedy people come to no good.

Sometimes the wall's bricks are etched with Confucian teachings such as “Be virtuous” and “Be compassionate.” A scene with an eagle soaring in the sky and fish jumping from a river, meanwhile, has profound Confucian implications. It denotes the “golden mean,” a cornerstone of Confucius' philosophy.

Imperial shadow walls

At the Forbidden City, the six eastern and western palaces where the emperor's concubines lived each have a shadow wall. Some are made of wood, some of carved rocks and others of glazed tiles.

Of all the shadow walls in the city, the glazed-tile wall in Beihai Park, northwest of the palace, is the most magnificent. The wall, which is 32.4 meters long, 5.6 meters high and 1.35 meters thick, was built in 1530, the ninth year of the reign of Qing Dynasty's Jiaqing Emperor. Both sides are carved with nine ferocious dragons flying or snaking through thunderous clouds. If you look carefully enough, you will find as many as

635 smaller dragons carved on its glazed roof, ridges and sides. It used to be a shadow wall for a Ming imperial villa in the suburbs.

On the northern shore of Beihai is a deep-red shadow wall that looks iron-made. It is in fact built from granulate, a rock consisting mainly of feldspar and quartz, which gives it the look of hard metal. It was moved there from Guozishi Street, in Deshengmen, in 1946.

Beijing's biggest shadow wall is located on Funei Avenue, formerly called Sheep Market Street. It stands on the south side

of the street and faces the main gate of the Royal Temple. The wall, which is 32.4 meters long, is roofed by green glazed tiles.

If you still have time for one more stop outside the old city center, you are advised to visit the former home of Li Lianying, a famous eunuch in the late Qing Dynasty, in Haidian District. The residence, on 24 Caihetan, features an artfully carved brick shadow wall with delicate flower patterns.



A large shadow wall at the former residence of writer Mao Dun



The Nine-Dragon Screen at Beihai Park

Photos by Jason Wang

A renovated shadow wall at a courtyard in Xicheng District

Dining

Hilton holiday celebration

PENTA's dining haven will be a room of celebration this holiday season. Enjoy Vasco's sumptuous Macanese and Portuguese delicacies along with roasted tom turkey and glazed ham with citrus. Try the stollen, Christmas cookies and pudding. The Chynna restaurant is also getting into the holiday spirit with a symphony of flavors from the north and south — cold and spicy blends with hot and sour. Santa Claus will travel the restaurant to meet with diners, and carolers will sing along with a string quartet and resident jazz band Casablanca.

Where: Hilton Beijing Wangfujing, 8 Wangfujing Dong Jie, Dongcheng District
Tel: 5812 8888

Grand Christmas baskets

Choose from Grand Millennium Beijing's top 20 gift baskets to impress your relatives, family and friends during this season. Exquisite theme baskets include Chinese tea sets, barbecue, chocolate, gourmet, wine and liquor, steamed goodies and a festive Christmas basket. Whole roasted turkeys with chestnut stuffing and cranberry sauce or honey-glazed ham are available for takeaway.

Where: Grand Millennium Beijing, Fortune Plaza, 7 Dongsanhuan Zhong Lu, Chaoyang District
Tel: 6530 9383

Christmas delights

Exquisite and authentic Christmas treats are available this festive season. Enjoy freshly baked waffles with hot cherries, baked apples with warm vanilla sauce, tasty mulled wine and punch in a relaxing and elegant atmosphere. Every Saturday and Sunday in December, a harp player will play classic Christmas melodies to round off an afternoon of pure Christmas joy.

Where: Rendez-vous Bar & Lounge, Kempinski Hotel Beijing Lufthansa Center, 50 Liangmaqiao Lu, Chaoyang District

When: November 27 – January 6, 2010, 2-7 pm
Tel: 6465 3388 ext. 4075

Dinner and show buffet

Capture the joy of Christmas and indulge in a delectable buffet with family and friends at the Arena. Win superb prizes in the raffle.

Where: Gloria Plaza Hotel Beijing, 2 Jianguomen Nan Dajie, Chaoyang District

When: 6:30 pm onwards

Cost: 1,788 yuan per adult, 888 yuan per child under age 12 (Gourmet Dinner with Christmas Gift); includes free sparkling wine, house wine, beer and soft drinks, live entertainment and party favors



Signature Chinese teas

Lobby Lounge is offering a fine selection of signature Chinese teas this season. Each tea is meant to be savored and enjoyed in the lounge's imperial palace-inspired surroundings. Guests can watch the rituals involved in the preparation and presenting of teas from the country's top tea-growing regions. Delightful miniature pastries by China World Hotel's award-winning team will be paired with sensational teas like plum tart, pear tart and peach tart.

Where: China World Hotel, 1 Jianguomen Wai Dajie, Chaoyang District
Tel: 6505 2266 ext. 37



Shooting Blue Star

Enjoy a divine Christmas Eve at the Sofitel Wanda Beijing. Enjoy amazing performances like trendy songs by a famous artist. The wonder extends to your plate with an extravagant buffet of festive specialties from around the world. Complete the dinner with fresh lobsters. French wine, international beers, soft drinks and juices will be served throughout the evening. Give your friends and family a memorable evening with four raffles and a unique gift for each guest.

Where: Sofitel Wanda Beijing, 93 Jianguo Lu, Chaoyang District

When: December 24

Cost: 2,988 yuan per person (Diamond), 2,688 yuan per person (Platinum), 2,388 yuan per person (Sapphire)

Tel: 8599 6666



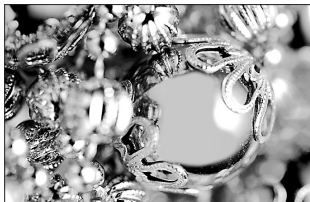
Christmas Eve

Treat yourself to Beijing's most sumptuous Christmas dinner at City Wall Bistro and Hawka to indulge in fresh seafood like prawns, king and snow crabs and scallops. There will also be a feast of Christmas roasts including turkey, lamb and honey ham, complimented by oven fresh breads, brick oven pizzas, pasta, sushi and sashimi, Hong Kong barbecue, noodles, Indian Tandoor, Thai curry and heavenly desserts, imported sparkling red and white wines, local beer, juices and soft drinks.

Where: Beijing Marriott Hotel City Wall, 7 Jianguomen Nan Dajie, Dongcheng District

Cost: 398 yuan per person, 199 yuan per child (age 6-12), under age 6 eat free

Tel: 5811 8888



Hotel

New food and beverage director at Shangri-La Kerry

Andrew Jansson is the new director of food and beverage at Shangri-La's Kerry Centre Hotel, Beijing. He is responsible for four restaurants and bars and an extensive catering service. Jansson, a Swedish national, has worked in the hotel industry since 1992. Prior to joining Shangri-La's Kerry Centre Hotel, he was director of food and beverage at Shangri-La's Villingili Resort and Spa, Maldives. He has also held senior positions in food and beverage operations in Shangri-La hotels in Penang, Muscat and Jakarta.

Top hotel in Asia in Condé Nast Traveler

For the second year, Park Plaza Beijing Wangfujing has been voted one of the top 100 hotels in Asia by readers of *Condé Nast Traveller*. Picked by 25,008 discerning readers, the Park Plaza advanced from 88th to 80th place in the 2009 Top 100 Asia Hotels list.

Mercure Beijing Downtown

Mercure Beijing Downtown announced Simon TIAN as its general manager. Simon joined Accor China in 2003, and his last position was resident manager of the Novotel Beijing Sanyuan. He also worked as director of sales and marketing at the Novotel Oasis Beijing and EAM/DOSM at Sofitel Hangzhou Xanadu.

The new Mercure Beijing Downtown is located in the Central Business District (CBD) near East Third Ring Road and Chang'an Avenue.

Christmas charity for a special night

Guests who donate 15 yuan can get a wish card and handful of candy. Write down wishes for love, health, family, business or wealth and tie it to the Christmas tree. Wish cards are candy-shaped and come



Christopher Chia (right), General Manager of Shangri-La Hotel, Beijing, celebrated the launching of Christmas Charity event.

with a five-color ribbon. Each color represents something different: red represents love, green represents health, purple represents family, blue represents business and yellow represents wealth.

Proceeds will be donated to support underprivileged students at the Dandelion Middle School.

Where: Shangri-La Beijing, 29 Zizhuyuan Lu, Haidian District

When: Until December 25
Tel: 6841 2211

Aviation

Singapore Airlines to fly twice-daily to Haneda, Tokyo

Singapore Airlines will begin twice-daily flights between Singapore and Tokyo Haneda airport next October, complementing the current twice-daily Tokyo Narita flight, which continues on to Los Angeles. In addition to Tokyo, the airline serves three other Japanese cities: Fukuoka (five times per week), Nagoya (daily) and Osaka (daily). The Airline has extensive code share ties with Star Alliance partner All Nippon Airways for Japan domestic flights and international flights between and beyond Japan and Singapore.



(By Sun Feng)

Event

Renaissance Man

Renaissance Man is a two-disc-jockey team of Downtown and Jaxxon from Helsinki. The two are tearing up house all over the world with their new style. Their first single "Spraycan" was met with critical acclaim and was spun by Switch, Duke Dumont, Brodinski, Riva Star and many others. *Renaissance Man* has been released on Dubside (Switch Label) and the up and coming Label Sound Pellegrino.

Where: The Opposite House, Building 1, 11 Sanlitun Lu, Chaoyang District

When: December 11
Tel: 6410 5230

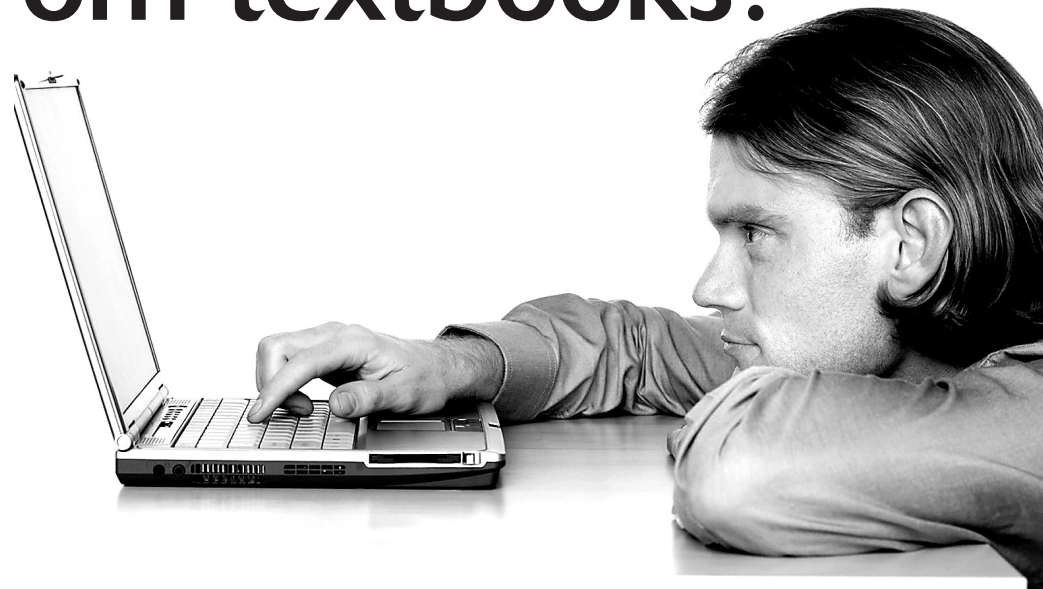
Chinglish story

This column focuses on Chinglish mistakes in our daily life. If you have any experiences to share, send them to Wang Yu at wangyu2008@ynet.com.

Blacklist

This is a column of words or phrases commonly misused by Chinese speakers. If you're planning to be an English teacher, reporter or employee of a multinational company, then watch out for this page each week.

What do we learn from textbooks?



By Wang Yu

Most Chinese people start studying English in primary school. Twenty years ago, when English pop music and movies were still rare, textbooks and audio tapes were the most common ways students learned a foreign language.

But no matter how high you scored on standardized English-language tests – be it CET-6, TEM-8 or IELTS – what you learned in school was not always fit for the “real world.”

My junior high classmate, Cindy Li, and I knew this from first-hand experience. Cindy, who now teaches English at a college in Tianjin, was the best English student in our class. She went to university in the US and told me when she came back that in an English-speaking country, “You will realize all you have learned from English lessons in China are in a sense useless – except maybe the vocabulary.”

To help herself acculturate to the US and make new friends, Li joined her university's student union and worked part-time job at a convenience store on campus. The attractive young woman soon became an active member of the student community.

One weekend afternoon she met up with some American friends at a campus diner.

“Hey Cindy, how you doin’?” Johnny, a schoolmate from New York, called out to her when she entered the restaurant.

“Fine, thanks, and you?” She squeezed into a booth beside two other members of the student union.

“Ah ... can't be better,” he said. “Listen, we're throwing a party next Saturday, inviting some bands from school. Can you make it?”

“Yeah, sure. I would love to!”

“Hey, you guys, Cindy! How are you?” It was David, a guy who lived in the same dormitory and had just gotten back from a trip to Western Europe. He took quick strides to their table. “Fine, thanks and you?” Cindy said. The group had been friends for two years and were used to Cindy's standard reply to “how are you.”

This is a typical exchange depicted in China's English textbooks. Our schools train us to talk like this, but native speakers find it stilted. A simple “I'm fine,” will do, but some habits are hard to break.

“Even my students feel weird if they

don't add a ‘thanks, and you’ to their answer. Nothing's wrong with it. It's just not how English is spoken in the real world,” Cindy told me during that meeting.

I agree with her. I had a similar, but more embarrassing, experience. In my sophomore year in college, a group of American exchange students came to my school and I was chosen to help organize their welcome party. Through the event, I met Jim, who became a good friend.

One day, we were talking about his group of American students and I must have asked one too many questions about the girls.

“Hey man, just tell me which one of them you like and I'll introduce you to her,” Jim said with a grin.

“Er ... I like, Britney,” I said after a pause.

“We have two Britneys, man,” he said.

“I mean the one with yellow hair.”

“Oh, the blonde Britney,” he said.

That was only when I learned that “blonde” is the right word to describe “yellow hair.” But I swear, the textbooks I had read used “yellow hair” in the same context.

I wonder whether the textbooks have corrected this mistake.

Chinglish on the way

This column aims to identify Chinglish in public areas. If you see any Chinglish signs, please send a picture of it to wangyu2008@ynet.com together with your name and address.

The young acupuncture needle of boiler fertilizes a cattle

By Tiffany Tan

Can you picture what this sign is saying? If you can imagine a needle mating with a cow, you're on the right track.

My page editor told me I would find this photograph funny. He's right; anyway, nothing tickles foreigners like Chinglish menu entries.

I still remember my first experience. It was in the winter of 2005 in my university's cafeteria. I had arrived in Beijing just a few weeks earlier and could barely keep myself nourished with the Chinese I knew, so I was relieved to see an English translation beside the blur of Chinese characters



on the menu ... until I reached “adopted mother beef.” I can't remember what the dish was, but the concept of adop-

tion among cattle that it espoused I'll never forget.

“It's because China has a long and rich history and culture,” a former Chinese flat mate from Fujian Province said. “We don't just describe a dish; we create an image of what it represents.”

But in this case, the dish is pretty straightforward. In Chinese it says, “hot pot with needle mushrooms and fatty beef.” As usual, we get pulled under by a literal translation. “Acupuncture needle” is *zhen* in *jin-zhengu* mushroom, while fertilizes comes from *fei*, which can mean “fatty” or “fertile.”

1. The pirates have graduated to attack oil tankers.

Professor Zhu Shida (ZS): In this example, the verb to “graduate” means to change gradually. It is an intransitive verb. It has nothing to do with “finishing a course of study at a school,” though it is evolved in meaning from it. We usually say, From simple purse-snatching, he graduated to robbery. It is all right to say: “graduate to robbery,” but it is wrong to say: “graduate to rob.” So, for this sentence, we should say: The pirates have graduated to attacking oil tankers from simply harassing small freighters. Another example: She has quickly graduated to taking leads in movies.

Native speaker Steven Sandor (SS): In this case, “to graduate” fails to address the question of from what the pirates graduated. If their prior target is known, a correct phrasing would be, “The pirates have graduated from harassing small ships to attacking oil tankers.” If the prior target is unknown, the writer could skirt around this trap by stating, “The pirates have boldly started attacking oil tankers.” This at least retains the meaning that oil tankers are a daring new target.

2. Take the crews prisoners

ZS: It is fairly natural for the writer to presume that since the crews are in plural number, the prisoner that is followed should be in plural number too. However, this is wrong. As you know, “to take prisoner” is a set phrase no matter how many people are kept as prisoners. We have an example here: When the two men got out of the truck, they were taken prisoner. You will not say: they were taken prisoners. No, absolutely not. So, for this sentence, the right way to say it is: Take the crews prisoner. I can now think of another case very similar to this one. That is: take hostage. We say, The terrorists held 50 hostages. In this case, “hostages” is in plural number. But if we use the phrase “to take hostage,” we will have to say: The terrorists took two men hostage. The word in the set phrase is in singular form no matter how many hostages are taken.

SS: Setting aside the fact this is a set phrase, there is another reason this is obviously a mistake. The crew is a non-count noun. Non-count nouns always take singular verbs. “Water has flooded the plain,” you can never say “Water have flooded.” The crew refers to a collective body of people. Since you would say, “Take him prisoner,” you would therefore say “Take the crew prisoner.”

3. Piracy has been endemic to the Indian Ocean.

ZS: You may wonder whether it is “to” or “in” to follow “endemic.” It is perfectly righteous for you to weigh the usage of prepositions in this case. As “endemic” means “regularly found among a particular people or in a particular locality,” such as “endemic disease,” “endemic folkways” and “endemic species,” it seems more appropriate to use “in.” For instance, Cholera is endemic in India. However, it is also right to say: Each scientist has noted some new species in the rich variety of flora and fauna that are endemic to the Seychelles. So, for “endemic,” it is both right to say “endemic to” or “endemic in.” We may too have another way of saying the word: a spirit endemic of our people. That means it is a sort of spirit that is unique to our people.

SS: Substitute a word with a similar meaning and sometimes the answer becomes clearer. Since you would say, “Piracy has been common in the Indian Ocean,” “in” is most likely the correct word. Of course, one could also argue for the use of “on,” since most likely the pirates are not attacking submarines.

Movie of the week

I had big expectations for *Inglourious Basterds* after seeing the previews, and surprisingly, the movie delivered.

Writer and director Quentin Tarantino brings a war story infused with the spirit of Wild West classics like the films of Sergio Leone.

His writing was spot on, and the transitions between four spoken languages were seamless. The movie comes out of his classic mold: cuts between rich dialogue and sudden scenes of shocking action.

Synopsis

In Nazi-occupied France, young Jewish refugee Shosanna Dreyfus witnesses the slaughter of her family by Colonel Hans Landa. Narrowly escaping with her life, she plots revenge years later when German war hero Fredrick Zoller takes an interest in her and arranges a movie premiere at the theater she now runs.

With the promise of every major Nazi officer in attendance, the event catches the attention of the "Basterds," a group of Jewish-American guerilla soldiers led by the ruthless Lt. Aldo Raine. As the relentless executioners advance and the conspiring young girl's plans are set in motion, their paths will cross for a fateful evening that will shake the very annals of history.

Scene 1

At a French farmer's house

Hans Landa (L): While I'm very familiar with you and your family, I have no way of knowing if you are familiar with whom I am. Are you aware of my existence?

Farmer LaPadite (F): Yes.

L: This is good. Now, are you aware of the job I've been ordered to carry out in France?

F: Yes.

L: Please tell me what you've heard.

F: I've heard that the Fuhrer has put you in charge of **rounding up (1)** the Jews left in France who are either hiding or **passing for (2)** Gentiles.

L: The Fuhrer couldn't have said it better himself.

F: But the meaning of your visit, pleasant though it is, is mysterious to me. The Germans looked through my house nine months ago for hiding Jews and found nothing.

L: I'm aware of that. I've read the reports of this area. But like any enterprise, when under new management, there is always a slight duplication of efforts, most of it being a complete waste of time, but needs to be done nevertheless. I just have a few questions, monsieur LaPadite. If you can assist me with answers, my department can **close the file (3)** on your family.



Vocabulary:

- 1. round up:** to assemble or gather suspects
- 2. pass for:** to assume a fake identity
- 3. close file:** to end the investigation
- 4. yank ... out:** to remove something
- 5. give away:** to become exposed
- 6. in the hands of:** to be caught
- 7. got what one deserved:** a phrase alluding to Hammersmark's death

(By Huang Daohen)

Scene 2

At an operation room

Lieutenant Aldo Raine (R): Before we **yank that slug out of (4)** you, you need to answer a few questions.

Bridget von Hammersmark (H): Few questions about what?

R: About I got three men dead back there. Why don't you try telling us what the f--k happened?

H: The British officer blew his German act and the Gestapo major saw it.

R: Before we get into who shot John? Why'd you invite my men to a rendezvous in a basement with a bunch of Nazis?

H: I can see since you didn't see what happened inside, that the Nazis being there must look odd.

R: Yeah, we got a word for that kind of odd in English. It's called suspicious.

H: The Germans being there was either a trap set by me or a tragic coincidence. It couldn't be both.

R: How'd the shooting start?

H: The Englishman **gave himself away (5)**.

R: How'd he do that?

H: He ordered three glasses. We order three glasses. That's the German three. The other looks odd. Germans would and did notice it.

R: Okay, let's pretend there were no Germans and everything went exactly the way it was supposed to. What was the next step?

H: Tuxedos. To get them into the premiere wearing military uniforms

Scene 3

At Schutzstaffel's interrogation room

Hans Landa (L): So you're Aldo the Apache.

Lieutenant Aldo Raine (R): So you're The Jew hunter.

L: You've had a nice long run, Aldo. Alas, you're now **in the hands of (6)** the Schutzstaffel. My hands to be exact. And they've been waiting a long time to touch you, caught you flinching. Tell me, Aldo, if I were sitting where you're sitting, would you show me mercy?

R: Nope.

L: What is that English expression about shoes and feet? "Looks like the shoe is on the other foot."

R: Yeah, I was just thinking that.

L: I'm a detective, a damn good detective. Finding people is my specialty, so naturally, I worked for the Nazis finding people. And, yes, some of them were Jews. But Jew hunter? Just a name that stuck.

R: Well, you do have to admit, it is catchy.

L: Do you control the nicknames your enemies bestow on you? Aldo the Apache and the Little Man?

R: What do you mean the Little Man?

L: Germans' nickname for you.

R: The Germans' nickname for me is the Little Man?

L: And as if to make my point, I'm a little surprised how tall you were in real life. I mean, you're a little fellow, but not circus-midget little, as your reputation would suggest.

R: Where's my men? Where's Bridget von Hammersmark?

L: Well, let's just say, she **got what she deserved (7)**. And when you purchase friends like Bridget von Hammersmark, you get what you pay for. Now as far as your *paesanos*, Sergeant Donowitz and private Omar ...

R: How you know our names?

L: Lieutenant Aldo, if you don't think I wouldn't interrogate every single one of your swastika-marked survivors, we simply aren't operating on the level of mutual respect I assumed.

